

MARVEL

VOLUME 1 - APPENDIX 1

Inhumans
Black Panther
Punisher
Marvel Boy

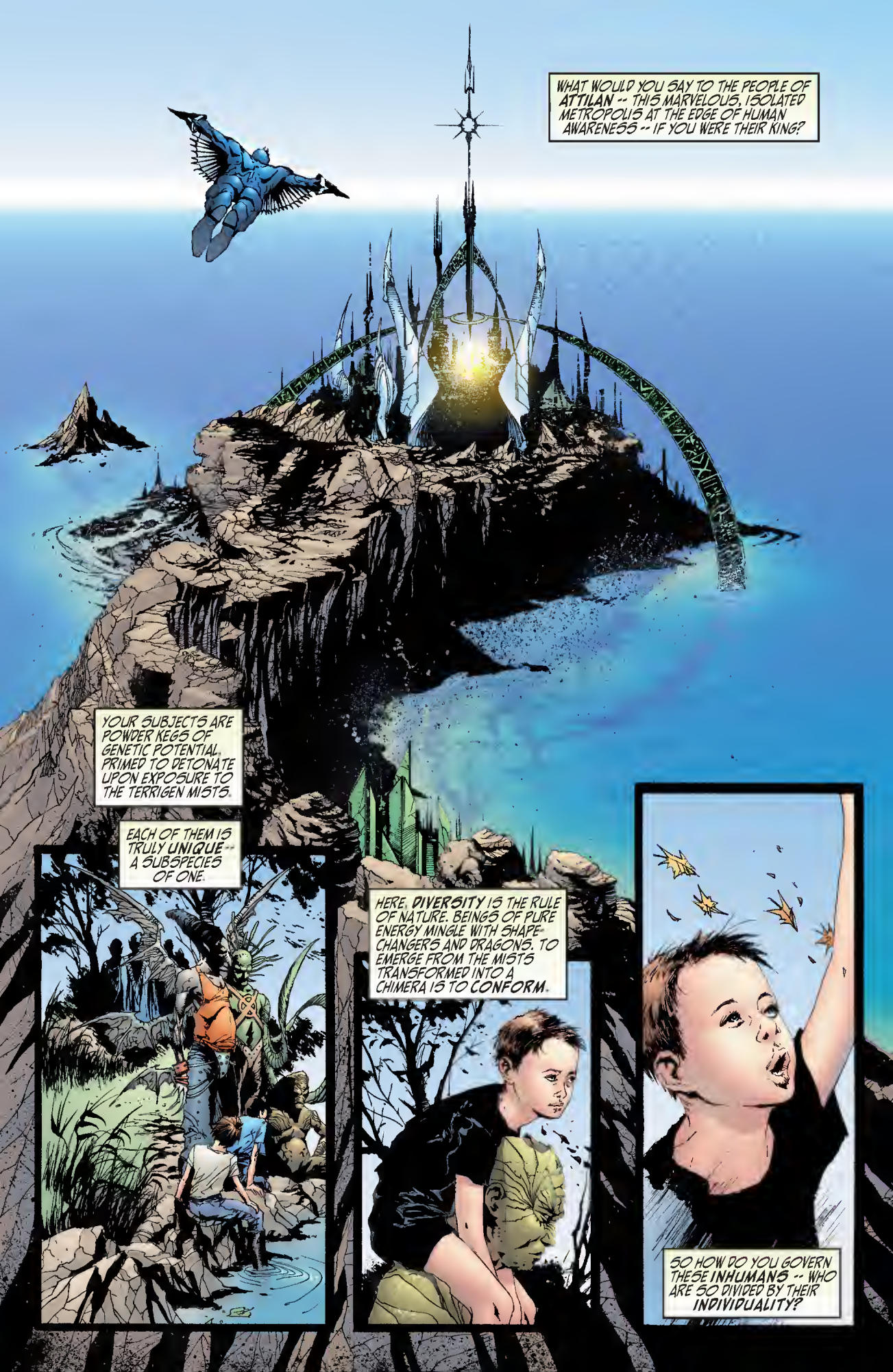

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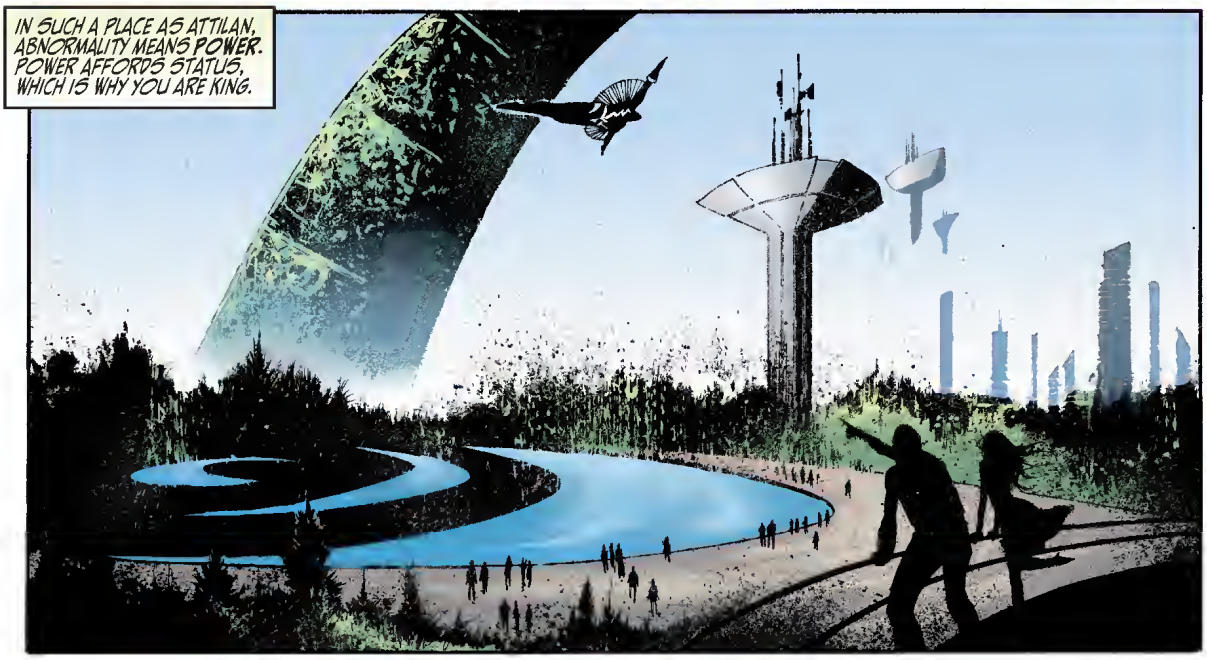


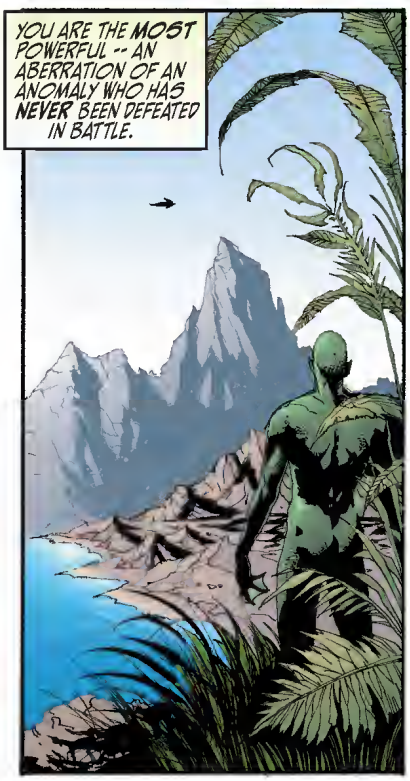


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WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO THE PEOPLE OF ATTILAN -- THIS MARVELOUS, ISOLATED METROPOLIS AT THE EDGE OF HUMAN AWARENESS -- IF YOU WERE THEIR KING?
YOUR SUBJECTS ARE POWDER KEGS OF GENETIC POTENTIAL, PRIMED TO DETONATE UPON EXPOSURE TO THE TERRIGEN MISTS.
EACH OF THEM IS TRULY UNIQUE -- A SUBSPECIES OF ONE.
HERE, DIVERSITY IS THE RULE OF NATURE. BEINGS OF PURE ENERGY MINGLE WITH SHAPE-CHANGERS AND DRAGONS. TO EMERGE FROM THE MISTS TRANSFORMED INTO A CHIMERA IS TO CONFORM.
SO HOW DO YOU GOVERN THESE INHUMANS -- WHO ARE SO DIVIDED BY THEIR INDIVIDUALITY?

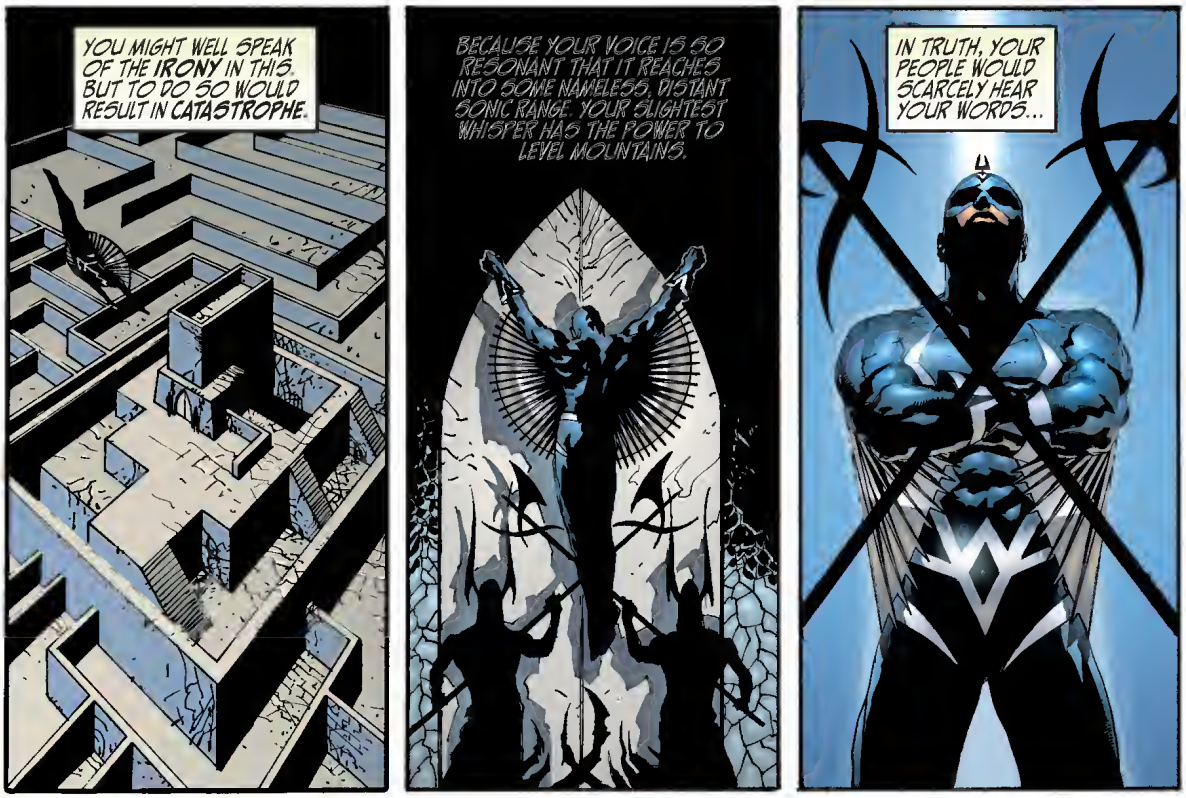

YOU ARE THEIR MODEL OF STOIC CONSISTENCY -- THEIR FATHER, MOTHER, PRIEST AND TEACHER. YOU HAVE THE CAPACITY TO DESTROY UTTERLY, AND TO CREATE PROFUSELY.

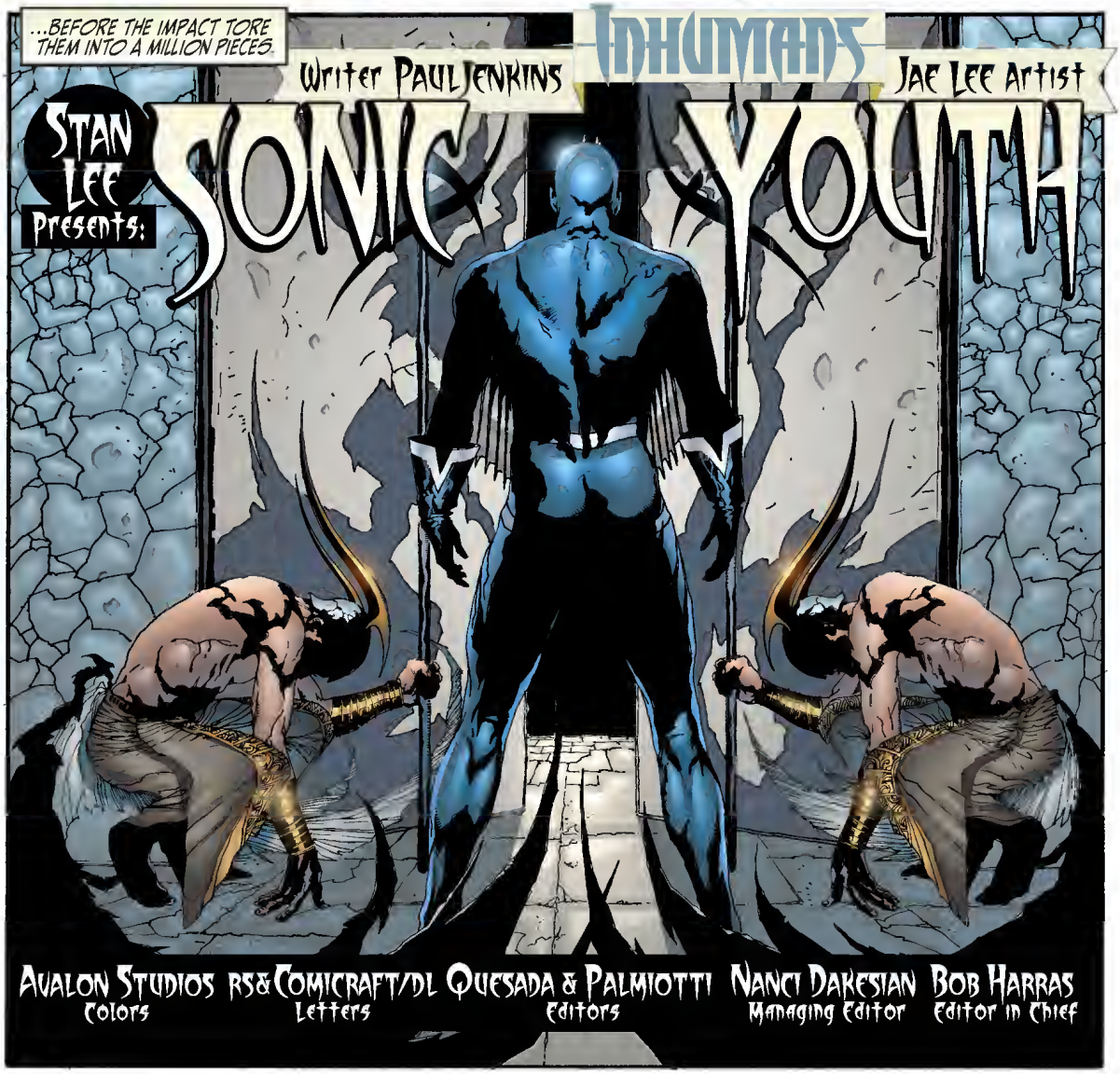

IN SUCH A PLACE AS ATTILAN, ABNORMALITY MEANS **POWER**. POWER AFFORDS STATUS, WHICH IS WHY YOU ARE KING.


YOU ARE THE **MOST** POWERFUL -- AN ABERRATION OF AN ANOMALY WHO HAS **NEVER** BEEN DEFEATED IN BATTLE.


YOU ARE SO FAR REMOVED FROM AVERAGE THAT YOU SEEM **MORE** THAN INHUMAN.


LIKE A NECESSARY GOD.


YOU MIGHT WELL SPEAK OF THE IRONY IN THIS. BUT TO DO SO WOULD RESULT IN CATASTROPHE.
BECAUSE YOUR VOICE IS SO RESONANT THAT IT REACHES INTO SOME NAMELESS, DISTANT SONIC RANGE. YOUR SLIGHTEST WHISPER HAS THE POWER TO LEVEL MOUNTAINS.
IN TRUTH, YOUR PEOPLE WOULD SCARCELY HEAR YOUR WORDS...


...BEFORE THE IMPACT TORE THEM INTO A MILLION PIECES.
INHUMANS
Writer PAUL JENKINS
JAE LEE Artist
STAN LEE Presents:
SONIC YOUTH
AVALON STUDIOS Colors
RS&COMICRAFT/DL Letters
QUESADA & PALMIOTTI Editors
NANCI DAKESIAN Managing Editor
BOB HARRAS Editor in Chief

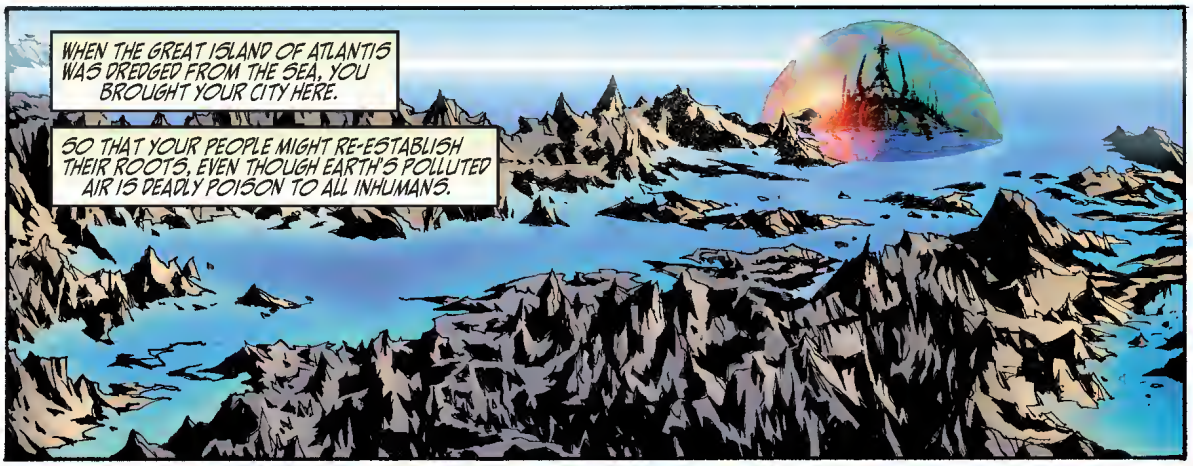

I KNOW YOU'RE *THERE*, BROTHER.

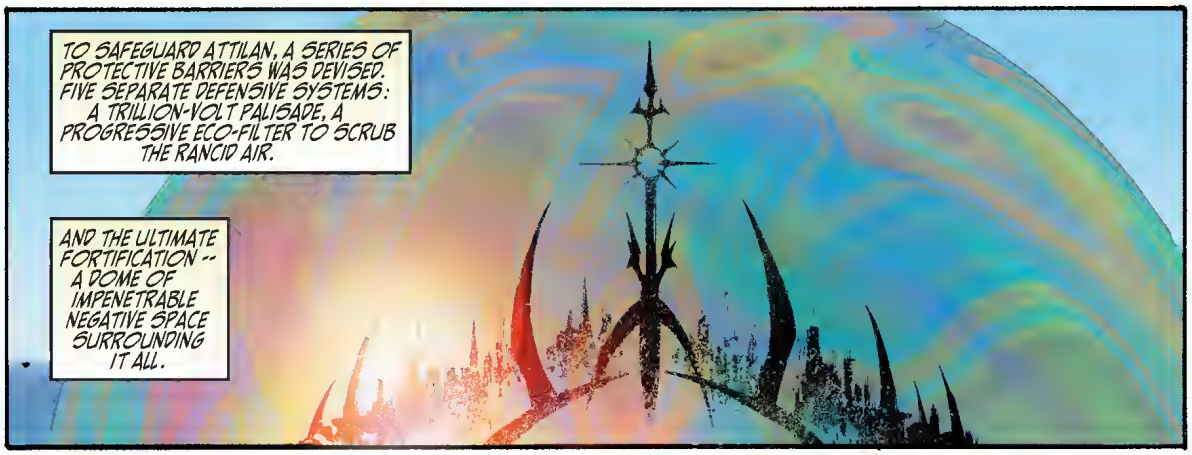

THERE'S SOMETHING ON YOUR MIND. *ISN'T* THERE? I CAN ALWAYS TELL.
UNLESS YOU DROPPED BY JUST TO PASS THE TIME OF DAY. HEAVEN *FORFEND*...
*WHAT DO YOU SAY TO YOUR BROTHER, **MAXIMUS** -- THIS TWISTED AND REMORSELESS LUNATIC TO WHOM YOU ARE BOUND BY THE LAWS OF FATE AND FAMILY?*
HOW DO YOU COMMUNICATE WITH A MAN WHOSE MIND RESONATES ON A PLANE TWICE REMOVED FROM REALITY?
*ARE THERE WORDS ENOUGH TO SATISFY A CANNIBAL OF THE **HEART**?*


Mm? Oh... I'M ENJOYING MY TIME HERE IMMENSELY, THANK YOU FOR ASKING.
SO TELL ME, BLACKAGAR. HOW HAVE YOU BEEN?
Hehh... ah. THAT'S A RHETORICAL QUESTION, OF COURSE. SO I'D PREFER IT IF YOU DIDN'T ANSWER DIRECTLY. AFTER ALL, WE WOULDN'T WANT A REPEAT OF THAT OTHER UNPLEASANTRY, NOW WOULD WE?
AND DON'T PRETEND YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND WHAT I'M TALKING ABOUT... YOU KNOW...
"...I MEAN THAT TIME YOU MURDERED OUR PARENTS."


"IT WASN'T MY FAULT -- I DIDN'T ASK YOU TO BE THERE WHEN THE KREE CAME. YOU AND THAT INTRACTABLE, INSUFFERABLE CONSCIENCE OF YOURS.
"YOU JUST COULDN'T LEAVE ME TO MY LITTLE FAUX PAS, COULD YOU? YOU HAD TO SAY SOMETHING...
"...JUST TO BRING THE WHOLE PARTY CRASHING DOWN IN FLAMES."


I KNOW YOU COULD SPEAK IF YOU WANTED TO, BROTHER. BUT WHAT WOULD YOU POSSIBLY SAY?
WOULD YOU TELL EVERYONE EXACTLY WHAT YOU DID TO MOTHER AND FATHER, AND RUN THE RISK OF LOSING YOUR PRECIOUS THRONE?
WELL, IT'D PROBABLY DO YOU SOME GOOD INSTEAD OF STANDING AROUND LIKE A STATUE ALL DAY.
YOU THINK YOU'RE FOOLING THEM, BUT YOU'RE NOT. THERE'S A FLAW. D'YOU HEAR ME?
A FLAW!
THAT'S IT... GO ON. ADMIT TO YOUR GUILT, DAMN YOU! I KNOW YOU WANT TO!
IT'S TEARING YOU UP INSIDE.


WHEN THE GREAT ISLAND OF ATLANTIS WAS DREDGED FROM THE SEA, YOU BROUGHT YOUR CITY HERE.
SO THAT YOUR PEOPLE MIGHT RE-ESTABLISH THEIR ROOTS, EVEN THOUGH EARTH'S POLLUTED AIR IS DEADLY POISON TO ALL INHUMANS.


TO SAFEGUARD ATTILAN, A SERIES OF PROTECTIVE BARRIERS WAS DEVISED. FIVE SEPARATE DEFENSIVE SYSTEMS: A TRILLION-VOLT PALISADE, A PROGRESSIVE ECO-FILTER TO SCRUB THE RANCID AIR.
AND THE ULTIMATE FORTIFICATION -- A DOME OF IMPENETRABLE NEGATIVE SPACE SURROUNDING IT ALL.


YOU PEERED OUTSIDE, BUT THE LOOMING, ARCHAIC STRUCTURES OF ATLANTIS SEEMED UNWILLING TO DIVULGE THEIR LONG-KEPT SECRETS.
SILENT GHOSTS. YOU RESOLVED TO TALK TO THEM ONE DAY. WHEN THE TIME WAS RIGHT.


BUT BEFORE YOU COULD, THE HUMANS SHOWED UP AND BEGAN FIGHTING OVER THE SCRAPS.


WHERE THEY ARE ARROGANT, THEY ARE NOBLE; DIVISIVE AND YET CAPABLE OF UNQUESTIONING LOYALTY.
THEY HIDE THEIR COMPASSION BENEATH HOSTILITY.
THEY ARE OZONE EATERS. EACH OF THEM HARBORS AN APOCALYPTIC ARRAY OF VIRUSES AND BACTERIAL INFECTIONS, TO WHICH THEY HAVE A HERCULEAN RESISTANCE.
FOR MONTHS NOW, THEY HAVE BEEN RAKING THE ANCIENT ISLAND FOR METAL AND MINERALS. INTERNATIONAL CONGLOMERATES, SUPPORTED BY THE OCCUPYING PORTUGUESE ARMY.
WHATEVER YOU SAY TO THEM, IT HAD BETTER BE GOOD. BECAUSE THESE HUMANS, WHO BRING PESTILENCE, DISEASE AND DECAY TO YOUR PEOPLE, ARE BACK.
AND THEY'RE LESS THAN A MILE AWAY FROM YOUR BORDER.


SOMETHING TROUBLES YOU, LADY MEDUSA?
IT'S MY *HUSBAND*, MARISTA.
SOMETIMES I WONDER AT THE WEIGHT OF HIS RESPONSIBILITY.
PERHAPS I'M BEING RIDICULOUS... BUT IT'S HARD TO SEE WHERE *I* FIT INTO IT ALL.
ISN'T IT THE SAME WITH *ALL* OF THEM, MY LADY?
I SUPPOSE IT IS.
IT'S JUST...
...SOMETIMES, HE'S CAPABLE OF LOOKING AT ME IN SUCH A WAY THAT I'M SO COMPLETELY *SURE* OF WHAT HE FEELS. OTHER TIMES, HE'S AN ENIGMA.
I JUST WISH... *YOU* KNOW... SOMETIMES, I NEED MORE THAN ANYTHING TO HEAR THE WORDS.
BUT HE *CAN'T* SAY THEM. AND HE NEVER *WILL*.


"EVERY NIGHT, HE GOES AHEAD OF ME, TO MEDITATE ALONE. SO THAT WHILE HE'S SLEEPING HE DOESN'T ACCIDENTALLY SAY SOMETHING THAT MIGHT DESTROY US ALL.
"FOR ONE HOUR EVERY NIGHT, MARISTA... TO PURGE ALL THE THOUGHTS OF THE DAY FROM HIS MIND.
"CAN YOU IMAGINE THE SHEER EFFORT OF WILL THAT IT TAKES TO FORCE YOURSELF TO SLEEP IN ABSOLUTE SILENCE?
"TO PUSH AWAY EVERY SIGHT AND SOUND YOU'VE EXPERIENCED, TO DETACH YOURSELF FROM EVEN THE MEMORY OF YOUR EMOTIONS--"
ARE YOU AFRAID HE'S GOING TO MAKE A MISTAKE, MY LADY?
NO... NO. BUT DON'T YOU SEE, THAT'S THE PROBLEM!
IT TERRIFIES ME TO THINK THAT MY HUSBAND CAN SO EASILY CLOSE THE DOOR TO HIS MIND, AND LOCK EVERYTHING AND EVERYONE OUT.
INCLUDING ME.


...AND SO, WE COME TO HER *PATERNAL* LINEAGE, AS IS MY DUTY, HONOR AND PRIVILEGE TO RECITE, YOUR MAJESTY.
Um... BEGINNING WITH ME, OBVIOUSLY. AND THEN ON TO MY FATHER, GRIMAL, *ALSO* A CARNIVORE...
...WHOSE FATHER BEFORE HIM WAS TAURON, SECOND COUSIN TO VEL. Um... WITH WHOM YOUR FATHER DINED OFTEN, AS YOU MAY RECALL...
WHAT DO YOU TELL HER, THIS CHILD OF INFINITE POSSIBILITIES?


DO YOU TELL HER THAT THE WORLD IS A VIOLENT, ANGRY PLACE, POPULATED BY VIOLENT, ANGRY PEOPLE? THAT SHE IS ALREADY MISUNDERSTOOD JUST FOR THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF HER BIRTH?
THAT HER HOME COULD COLLAPSE AT ANY MOMENT ON THE WHIM OF A MAD PRETENDER TO THE THRONE?
THAT THE UNIVERSE IS A CUP OF DANGER WHICH CAN SPILL OVER AT ANY SECOND?
HOW DO YOU EXPLAIN ALL OF THAT?


...AND THE GOAT SAYS, "I DON'T KNOW, BUT THE ONE IN THE MIDDLE IS DEFINITELY A SHAPE-CHANGER!"
A SHAPECHANGER! AH-HEHH...
HAHAHAHAHA
HA-EHN...
HMMF... THERE'S A CRACK IN YOUR GLASS, KARNAK.
I KNOW.


I'M WORRIED ABOUT OUR KING.
YOU... WORRIED? AH-HEHH! YOU ARE A REPREHENSIBLE BEING, DEAR KARNAK.
IF I DIDN'T KNOW ANY BETTER FROM WATCHING YOU, I'D SWEAR YOU WERE IRREVOCABLY DRUNK.
IF SO, THE WORLD WOULD NEVER MAKE SENSE TO ME AGAIN.
I DON'T UNDERSTAND, BROTHER. YOU'VE BEEN AT THAT WINDOW FOR AN HOUR NOW. YOU KNOW HOW I HATE IT WHEN SOMEBODY LETS THEIR ALE GET WARM.
I'M SERIOUS. IF YOU DON'T COME OVER HERE RIGHT THIS MINUTE, I'M GOING TO DRINK IT --
AND ABOUT HIM, TOO... I NEVER THOUGHT THE DAY WOULD COME. IN ALL THE YEARS I'VE KNOWN YOU, KARNAK, YOU HAVE NEVER ONCE SO MUCH AS RAISED AN EYEBROW AT THE MOTIVES OF OUR KING.
OF ALL PEOPLE, YOUR LOYALTY TO BLACK BOLT IS BEYOND QUESTION. SO TELL ME... WHAT TROUBLES YOU?
A SECRET, GORGON. SOMETHING THAT I HAVE NEVER TOLD ANYONE.


TO INTERPRET THE SECRET, YOU MUST KNOW WHAT I KNOW. YOU MUST UNDERSTAND MY... GIFT.
"IN EVERYTHING, THERE HIDES A FLAW -- BE IT STRUCTURAL, GEOLOGICAL, PSYCHOLOGICAL. TO ME, THESE FLAWS APPEAR LIKE BEACONS THAT GUIDE THE WAY TO WEAKNESS.
"THE CRACKS APPEAR AT THE PERIPHERY OF MY AWARENESS, TO BE INTUITED...INTERPRETED.
"IT MATTERS NOT THE SIZE OF THE STRUCTURE, NOR THE MATERIAL FROM WHICH IT IS MADE. EVERYTHING HAS AN IMPERFECTION THAT CAN BE TRACED TO ONE SINGLE POINT AND EXPLOITED."
HMPH. ARE YOU SAYING THAT I AM ANYTHING LESS THAN PERFECT, KARNAK?
EVERYTHING HAS A FLAW, BROTHER. EVERYTHING AND EVERYONE.
EXCEPT FOR BLACK BOLT.


"I HAVE STUDIED HIM CONSTANTLY. HE IS SURROUNDED BY CHAOS AND INCONSISTENCY, YET HE GIVES NO INDICATION THAT IT AFFECTS HIM IN ANY WAY.
"IN ALL THE TIME I'VE KNOWN HIM, HE HAS NEVER ONCE WAVERED FROM HIS IMPOSSIBLE DUTY."
"AND DO YOU NOW DETECT FLAWS?"
NO. NO... BUT I *SHOULD.*
ENTROPY IS THE WAY OF THE UNIVERSE, GORGON. ONE DAY, THE CRACKS ARE GOING TO APPEAR -- THEY *MUST.*
AND WHEN THEY DO, I FEAR FOR US ALL.


...AND THE GOAT SAYS, "I DON'T KNOW, BUT THE ONE IN THE MIDDLE IS DEFINITELY A SHAPE-CHANGER!"
A SHAPECHANGER! HAHAHA
HPHSSS... HAHAHA
COUSIN GORGON, WELL KNOW YOU NOT RIBALDRY SO CLOSE TO EARS OF THE KING WELL KNOWN TO ANYBEING, FOR IF HE LAUGH...
TSK. SHAME TO YOU, FOR THE RISK YOU DEMOLISH US ALL --
THOUGH MY HUSBAND IS INCAPABLE OF SPEECH, COUSIN TRITON, I CAN ASSURE YOU THAT HIS HEARING IS VERY ACUTE.
I WOULD REMIND YOU THAT HE IS PRESENT AT THIS TABLE AND WOULD PREFER NOT TO BE SPOKEN ABOUT AS IF HE ISN'T THERE.
IF IT PLEASING YOUR MAJESTY... THIS BEING AM POOR FOOLISH. I HUMBLE APOLOGIZE.
HEY! DON'T YOU PICK ON POOR TRITON, SISTER. HE CAN'T HELP IT IF HE'S DIFFERENT... HE DOESN'T KNOW HOW TO SAY THINGS.
HMPH! I MAY BE SMASHED GROGGY, BUT AT LEAST I KNOW MY PLACE. IMPETUOUS CHILD.
I HAVE THE DEEPEST RESPECT FOR YOU, COUSIN GORGON, BUT SOMETIMES YOU CAN BE SUCH A BLOATED OLD OAF.


WHAT WOULD YOU SAY IF YOU COULD ONLY SAY JUST ONE SIMPLE PHRASE FOR THE REST OF YOUR LIFE?
WHAT WOULD YOU TELL THE PEOPLE AROUND YOU WHO ARE YOUR SUBJECTS, YOUR COUSINS, YOUR ALLIES?
RRR
PTOO
KRK
SORRY.
WHAT WOULD YOU SAY?


JUST ONE THING...
...AND YOU'D SHOUT IT ACROSS THE WORLD SO THAT EVERYONE COULD HEAR.
RELAX.

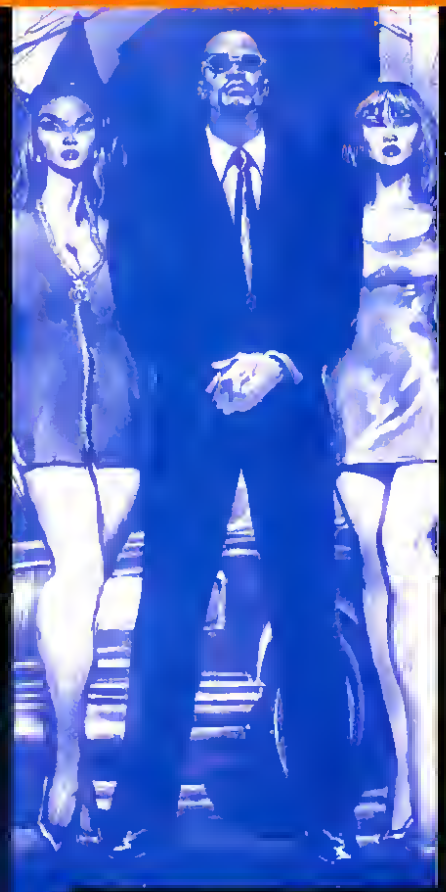

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BLACK PANTHER



With the sleekness of the jungle cat whose name he bears, **T'Challa-the Prince of Wakanda**-stalks both the concrete of the city and the undergrowth of the **Veldt**. So it has been for countless generations of warrior kings, so it is today-and so it shall be for as long as the law of the jungle dictates that only the swift, the smart, and the strong survive.



BLACK PANTHER/ T'CHALLA



A former member of the *Avengers*, he is the ruler of *Wakanda*, one of the few places in the world where the precious metal, Vibranium, is mined



Design by COMICRAFT's Eric Eng Wong



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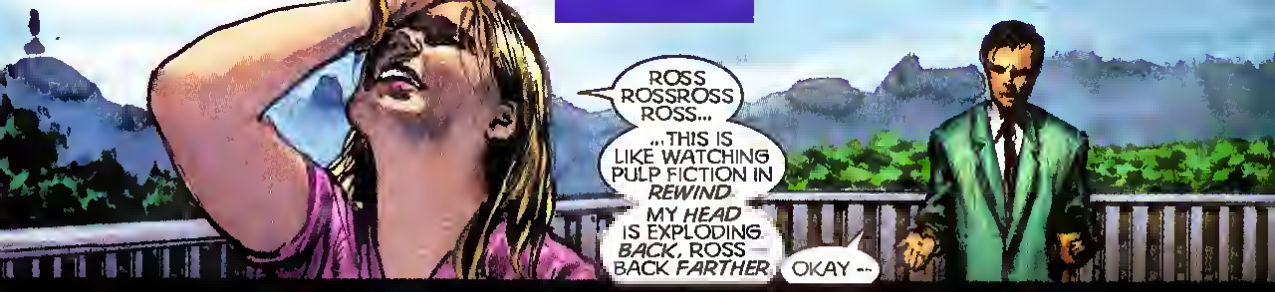
CAT MAN DO


And, yes, while struggling through finals at Oxford, this was JUST what I had in mind.
Shooting housing project rats while wearing no pants.
I named him Buster, as in Busta My Chops.
Buster knew I wouldn't shoot him – the rounds might go through the floor and hit somebody below.
Oddly enough, nobody was singing, which really disturbed me. I mean, on TV, there was all this *SINGING* in the ghetto. I was made to believe people sang here, and that singing would often spin out into these big production numbers.
I'd been lied to.
ZURI was a lifelong friend of T'CHAKA, the client's late father and previous king of Wakanda.
An old guy, Zuri could still break me in half and make ROSSWICHES –
– AT WHICH TIME WAKANDA ENTERED A PERIOD OF ACCELERATED GROWTH –
– which was primarily why I let him ramble on while we waited there for the client's return.
He didn't shut up until the DEVIL stopped by.


THE DEVIL.
THE DEVIL THE DEVIL THE DEVIL THE DEVIL. I MEAN THAT LITERALLY, NIKKI.
I'M LIKE *COMPLETELY* LOST NOW.
WHICH, SINCE YOU'RE MY *BOSS*, IS *BAD*, RIGHT --?
ROSS -- ALL YOU HAD TO DO IS KEEP YOUR EYE ON *ONE* CHIEF OF STATE --
WHO LIKES TO PULL ON A KITTY CAT MASK AND LEAP OUT OF WINDOWS.
YOUR REPORT'S A *MESS*, ROSS -- I NEED SOME *CONTEXT*. GO *BACK* --
OKAY --

CHEESE


THEY TOOK MY PANTS.
6975H23
MILAJE, DORA
75th Precinct
1000 Sutter Ave
Brooklyn, New York
11208-3553
16 Sept. 1998
6975H24
ZURI, NONE GIVEN
75th Precinct
1000 Sutter Ave
Brooklyn, New York
11208-3553
16 Sept. 1998
6975H25
PANTHER, THE BLACK
75th Precinct
1000 Sutter Ave
Brooklyn, New York
11208-3553
16 Sept. 1998
6975H26
ROSS, EVERETT K.
75th Precinct
1000 Sutter Ave
Brooklyn, New York
11208-3553
16 Sept. 1998



EVERETT K. ROSS, MIDNIGHT WARRIOR

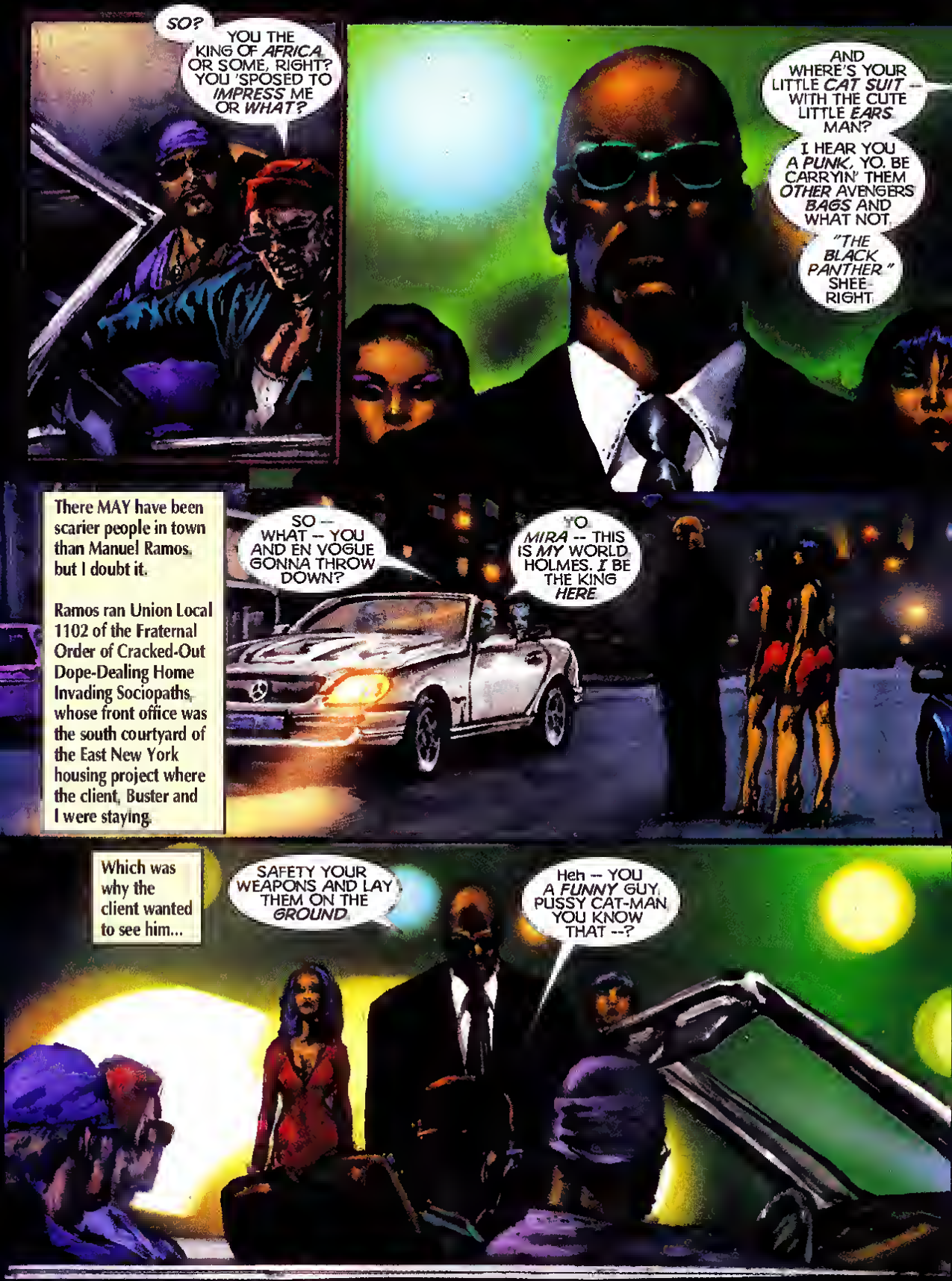


EVERETT K. ROSS, SUPERFLY




STAN LEE PROUDLY PRESENTS:
THE TRIUMPHANT RETURN OF
BLACK PANTHER IN
THE CLIENT
BY
CHRISTOPHER PRIEST
AND
MARK TEXEIRA
SCRIBES
JOE QUESADA
STORYTELLING
ALITHA MARTINEZ
BACKGROUND ASSISTS
AS and COMICRAFT's SIOBHAN NANNA
LETTERS
BRIAN HABERLIN
COLORS
NANCI DANESIAN
MANAGING EDITOR
EDITORS
JOE QUESADA and JIMMY PALMIOTTI
BOB HARRAS EDITOR IN CHIEF

ME, MY AND MINE




-- YOU SHOULD GET ON SINBAD.
THIS IS YOUR LAST WARNING.
SORRY. MY HEARING'S NOT SO GOOD ESE.
I THINK WE JUST HAVE TO KILL YOU NOW.
Ramos, the rocket scientist, was threatening an AVENGER, from the most technologically advanced society in the free world --
-- while leaning against a METAL CAR.
GGGNNHH!
MMFFPHH!
MMFFPHH!
GWAKK!
A nifty conductor for neural shock fields -- think souped-up stun gun blasts.
< SEE TO HIS MEN. >
< DO NOT KILL THEM. >
GHAAKK--!
The girls were six feet tall and not quite LEGAL age.

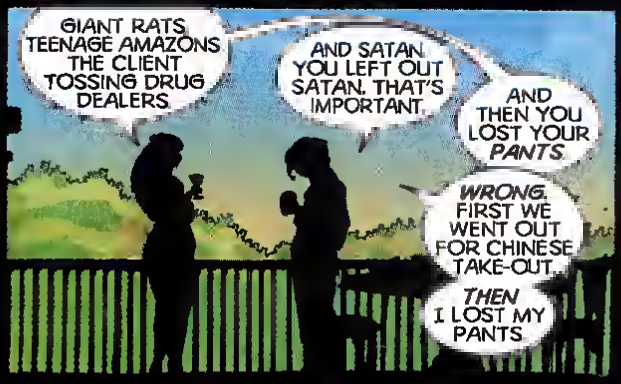

The client called them DORA MILAJE, or "adored ones," and described them as the king's concomitants.
A tribal thing -- kind of wives-in-training. And a real blast at state functions.
"Deadly Amazonian high school karate chicks --? Bill Clinton. Bill --?"
OKOYE was his chauffeur, NAKIA his personal aide.
The client spoke to them exclusively in HAUSA, which made my "Swahili For Dummies" cheat book pretty useless.
The client was always reminding them that KILLING is FROWNED UPON here in the United States. He substituted some non-lethal high-tech stuff for their traditional weapons.
None of which could stop them from throwing you off a ROOF.
KEEE
BASHHH
EY -- EYYY --!
I KILL YOU, MAN -- CUTCHO NECK --!


I WILL OFFER NO RESISTANCE.
THEN IT WILL BE MY TURN.
TAKE YOUR BEST SHOT.
AAAHH--!
KRAAK
AND, SO...

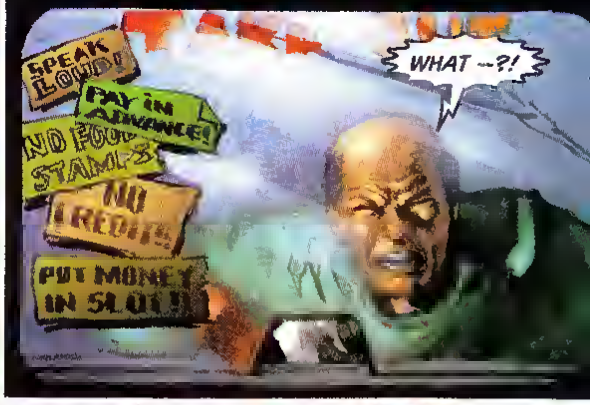

As I said, I learned most of this AFTER the fact. But I know for certain the client can make it from the STREET to the ROOF --
-- while towing a full-grown man by his HAIR -- in under 10 seconds.
Nikki, if I could sell TICKETS, I'd RETIRE.


WE WILL HAVE AN *UNDERSTANDING* BETWEEN US, RAMOS. SPEAK OF IT TO *NO MAN*.
KKAAAPP
A *CHILD* WAS *KILLED* AT *THE TOMORROW FUND*. IT IS *WHY* I AM *HERE* IN AMERICA AT A TIME WHEN MY *HOMELAND* NEEDS ME DESPERATELY.
YOU WILL *HELP* ME BRING THAT CHILD'S *KILLER* TO *JUSTICE*.
YOU WILL AGREE TO ACT AS MY *SERVANT* --
-- AND *I* WILL AGREE TO *NOT* CARVE YOUR *HEART* LIKE A *ROAST*.
YOU *CRAZY!!* YOU *CRAZY MAN* --!
SSZZAAACKK
THIS I HAVE BEEN CALLED.
FEAR NOT -- MY *ENERGY DAGGER* IS ON A *NON-LETHAL* SETTING. YOU WILL FEEL ONLY *PAIN*.
HOWEVER THE BLADE'S ENERGY SIGNATURE HAS *MARKED* YOU WHEREVER YOU GO, *KIMOYO* WILL *FIND* YOU.
THIS IS *YOUR LIFE*.
YOU BELONG TO *ME* NOW.

PAGING Mr. TARANTINO

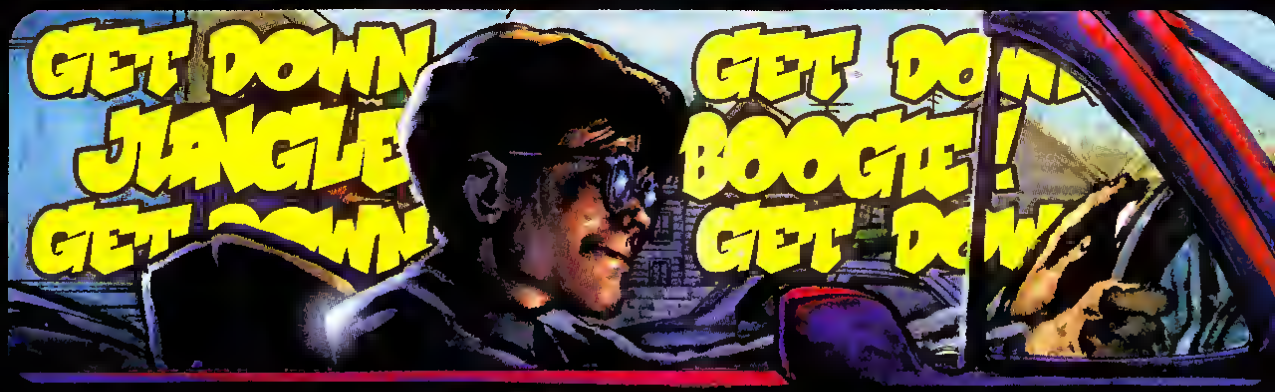


KUMUSTA KA





EVERETT K. ROSS AND THE GANG









WORLD NEWS

Wakandagate

An Avenger and African King becomes embroiled in a stateside scandal. Has the mask been lifted from Wakanda's squeaky-clean, fairy-tale like history?



The growing scandal surrounding The Tomorrow Fund exploded today, as investigators reported rampant mismanagement of funds, including federal matching grants targeted for needy children in the New Lo section of Brooklyn, New York. While official number has been released, sou within the New York Inspector Gene office estimate as much as 17.5 milion d may have been embezzled from TT that TTF's accounts may have been money laundering and drug traffick

A community self-help or established several years ago, t Wakandan Consulate's grant pr Tomorrow Fund's motto of Better Tomorrow" provide inspiration to thousands of youngsters, and was a hub New York community. Inve Drug Enforcement Ag Department, the FBI, a looking into the interna cash flow, and thorou role of Wakanda, th principally respons Fund's operation sources report hig T'Challa, also Panther," may despot with he T'Challa is se for The Tom year-old Ja poster chil

As you began af murder headqu Waka expr ang an o


WHICH MEANS EXACTLY *WHAT?*
DEAD KID -- SOME CREEPS MISMANAGE FUNDS -- THIS IS WHAT, A DAY --
-- A *WEEK* OF SAM DONALDSON GRINNING WITH THAT BIG PUMPKIN HEAD OF HIS --
-- GO LONG --
-- WHY ARE YOU GIVING THIS TO *ME?* WHY DON'T *YOU* TAKE IT?
BECAUSE I DON'T *WANT* IT. YOU SHOULD BE *GRATEFUL* I'M HANDING YOU SOMETHING THIS *BIG* --
-- THIS IS A *MAJOR DIPLOMATIC INCIDENT.*
WHY -- BECAUSE THE GUY IS *BLACK?*
ROSS...
IT'S *OKAY*, NIKKI -- YOU *CAN* SAY IT -- YOU WON'T GROW *HAIR* ON YOUR BACK OR ANYTHING.
KERRAASH
THIS IS THE ONLY COUNTRY IN THE *WORLD* WHERE PEOPLE LOOK AT YOU CROSS-EYED FOR STATING THE *OBVIOUS.*
AND YOU OWE ME TWELVE BUCKS FOR THE MIRROR
ROSS -- I'M SERIOUS -- THIS COULD BE *BIG* --
-- *KING T'CHALLA* IS CONSIDERING COMING HERE *PERSONALLY.*
NIKKI -- KING T'CHALLA IS ALSO THE *AVENGER* CALLED ELDREDGE CLEAVER --
BLACK PANTHER.
WHATEVER.
HE COMES HERE ALL THE *TIME.* HANGS OUT AT THE AVENGERS MANSION -- ORDERS UP SOME *RIBS* --
ROSS...
-- NIKKI -- THE GUY'S AS *DANGEROUS* AS *BATROC.* I MEAN, *THINK* ABOUT IT -- HE'S GOT *NO POWERS* OR ANYTHING
I GOT THIS. NO SWEAT.


Which, of course, were my famous last words.
You see, back in Wakanda, things were a little TENSE. The client had set up a refugee camp in the kingdom's border region where tribesmen seeking ASYLUM from regional ethnic wars would be SAFE.
Safe from their governments -- but not from EACH OTHER. They kinda brought their war WITH them. The client often found himself interceding in skirmishes between the refugees, which aggravated the Wakandan people that much MORE.
See, Wakandans come pretty much in TWO flavors -- the CITY DWELLERS and the MARSH TRIBESMEN. They never agreed on ANYTHING -- until the client granted asylum to the refugees.
So, to REVIEW: the city dwellers hated the tribesmen, the tribesmen hated the city dwellers, they both hated the refugees who hated THEM in return, despite the fact Wakanda was clothing and feeding them at the time. And, of course --


-- EVERYONE resented the client because he wouldn't do things THEIR WAY.
King T'Challa was a real STRAIGHT ARROW -- an IDEALIST who became KING as a teenager after his father was MURDERED.
Educated in Europe and America, he returned home to pass a series of trials and obtain a heart-shaped herb that heightened his physical strength and natural senses.
The cat suit is largely CEREMONIAL -- it marks him as the LEADER of the PANTHER CLAN.
The client was too noble a guy to cut the refugees loose.
He determined that all of Wakanda would learn to accept one another and help their neighbors.
In other words, he wasn't much of a politician.
And that was a perfectly LOUSY time for him to hear about the Tomorrow Fund SCANDAL...


MY LORD KING -- YOU CANNOT LEAVE THE KINGDOM NOW -- THE CLASHES AMONG THE REFUGEES COME EVER MORE FREQUENTLY --
-- CAUSING EVEN GREATER DIVISION AMONG THE WAKANDAN PEOPLE --
A CHILD IS DEAD
WHAT KIND OF KING -- WHAT KIND OF MAN WOULD I BE TO IGNORE THIS --?
THE PRICE OF A CROWN IS OFTEN A HEAVY HEART, MY LORD
I AM AWARE OF THESE THINGS, ZURI.
OUR SUPERSONIC JETS CAN GET US TO AMERICA IN UNDER THREE HOURS. WE WILL BE THERE LESS THAN FIVE DAYS.
IN AN EMERGENCY I MAY BE WITHIN THE PALACE WALLS IN A MATTER OF HOURS, ZURI --
AND, I GUESS NOTHING I CAN SAY WILL CHANGE YOUR MIND
AFRAID NOT, MOTHER.
N'YAMI IS YOUR MOTHER, T'CHALLA -- I'M JUST YOUR FATHER'S WIFE.
YOU'VE BEEN ALL THE MOTHER I COULD WISH FOR, RAMONDA
BUT NOT ENOUGH TO KEEP YOU HERE.
I PROMISE, MOTHER -- I'LL BE RIGHT BACK.


WHICH INEVITABLY LED TO MY LOSING MY PANTS...
THIS IS FASCINATING, ROSS, BUT I'M RUNNING OUT OF TIME.
THE CLIENT COMES TO TOWN -- YOU DUCK THE ASSIGNMENT AND GIVE IT TO ME.
I GO TO THE AIRPORT TO PICK HIM UP. I BRING THE MIATA
I figure, how much trouble could he BE?
What, the guy brings a TOOTHBRUSH -- an extra pair of TIGHTS or something, right?
SAVE IT FOR NEXT TIME, ROSS
JUST TELL ME ABOUT HIM -- WHEN DID HE ENTER THE PICTURE --?
THAT'S WHAT I WAS GETTING TO --
-- THE NIGHT I WAS HUNTING BUSTER WHILE THE CLIENT WAS OUT ROUGHING UP DRUG DEALERS --
-- someone knocked at the door.
...AND CONTINUING WAKANDA'S GRAND HISTORY -- IN 1984 WE PIONEERED MAGNETIC PULSE TECHNOLOGY --
-HIC-
ZURI was in his FOURTH history lesson. I thought MAYBE...if I was LUCKY... it'd be the angel of DEATH come to put me out of my misery.




I was very lucky.
SSLAAM
CRAASSH
IT'S FOR YOU.
NEXT:
THE CONSCIENCE OF THE KING
MY SOUL FOR A PAIR OF PANTS

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1

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COME ON, PICK UP, COME ON --
MIKE! MIKE, IT'S ME, MAN! YOU ARE NEVER GONNA BELIEVE WHAT JUST HAPPENED!
OKAY, GET THIS: I'M DOWN AT STICKY EDDIE'S TO SCORE, OKAY, FOR THE PARTY TOMORROW? AND I WALK IN AND HE'S DOING A DEAL WITH SOME GUYS, AND THERE'S MORE MONEY AND DOPE LAID OUT ON THE TABLE THAN I'VE EVER SEEN IN MY LIFE --
AND EDDIE SAYS WAIT 'TIL HE FINISHES UP AND I'M LIKE COOL, AND I'M CHILLING AND JUST TRIPPING, DUDE, WATCHING ALL THIS STUFF CHANGING HANDS LIKE THIS --
-- AND ALL OF A SUDDEN THE DOOR COMES BUSTING IN AND IT'S THE PUNISHER, MAN!

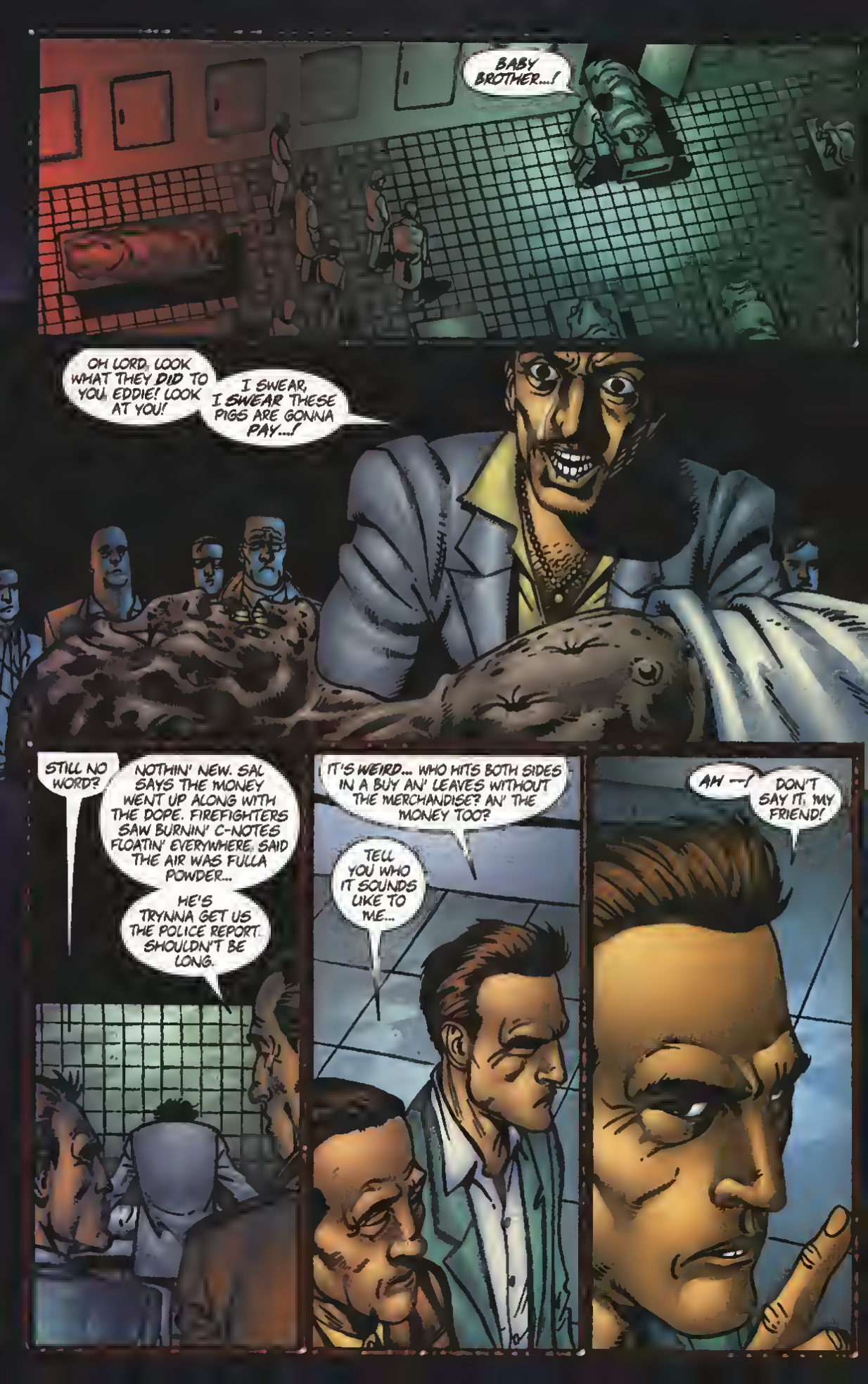

AND HE'S GOT THIS UZI, OKAY, AND HE'S NOT SAYING A WORD. HE JUST OPENS UP AND IT'S TEN SECONDS OF OLD SCHOOL JOHN WOO! EDDIE'S GUYS DON'T STAND A CHANCE! BRRRRRTTT!
AND HE SEES ME AND I JUST ABOUT WET MYSELF HERE, OKAY? AND I'M BEGGING HIM, I'M TRYNNA TELL HIM I'M JUST HERE TO SCORE, I DON'T MOVE THIS STUFF, AND I AM CERTAIN HE'S GONNA CAP ME --
-- AND HE SAYS HE'S GONNA GIVE ME JUST ONE CHANCE! HE SAYS TO QUIT USING, AND GET A JOB AND STAY CLEAN, AND HE EVEN TELLS ME TO CUT MY HAIR! HE CALLS ME A HIPPY, ROBBIE!
HE SAYS HE CAN FIND ME ANYWHERE, HE'LL BE WATCHING, ALL THAT GARBAGE -- AND HE TURNS AROUND AND WALKS OUT! HE WALKS OUT! I MEAN MIKE, MAN, DON'T YOU REALIZE WHAT THIS MEANS?
IT MEANS I'M SITTING ON ENOUGH PRODUCT TO SET US UP FOR THE REST OF OUR LIVES. AND ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS DRIVE DOWN HERE AND PICK ME UP AND I --
I HAVE TO GO NOW, MIKE.




MR. SMITH, DUDE!
HELLO, DAVE.
SPACKER DAVE!
HI, MR. SMITH.
HELLO, MR. BUMPO.
ER... YOU COULDN'T...?


THANKS!
HELLO, MR. SMITH.
HELLO, JOAN.
I LIVE HERE AS JOHN SMITH.
WHATEVER WORKS.


SOLO ACT AGAIN. NO MICRO.
NO GIMMICKS: NO FANCY AMMO, NO BATTLE-VANS, NO HI-TECH SURVEILLANCE.
JUST THE BASICS.
BEEN GONE A WHILE. DISTRACTED.
THE SCUM IN THIS CITY NEED A WAKE-UP CALL.
AND HERE IT COMES.


BABY BROTHER...!
OH LORD, LOOK WHAT THEY DID TO YOU, EDDIE! LOOK AT YOU!
I SWEAR, I SWEAR THESE PIGS ARE GONNA PAY...!
STILL NO WORD?
NOTHIN' NEW. SAL SAYS THE MONEY WENT UP ALONG WITH THE DOPE. FIREFIGHTERS SAW BURNIN' C-NOTES FLOATIN' EVERYWHERE. SAID THE AIR WAS FULLA POWDER...
HE'S TRYNNA GET US THE POLICE REPORT. SHOULDN'T BE LONG.
IT'S WEIRD... WHO HITS BOTH SIDES IN A BUY AN' LEAVES WITHOUT THE MERCHANDISE? AN' THE MONEY TOO?
TELL YOU WHO IT SOUNDS LIKE TO ME...
AW —!
DON'T SAY IT, MY FRIEND!


"DON'T EVEN THINK IT!"
WHOA, BIG GUY...!
...MORGUE'S OFF-LIMITS TO CIVILIANS, PAL. BETTER TURN AROUND AND MOSEY ON BACK TO THE HOSPITAL.
COME ON. OFF YOU GO...
SO HOW MUCH DID BOBBIE GNUCCI PAY FOR A LOOK AT HIS BROTHER'S CORPSE?
HUNDRED BUCKS, MAN. YOU WANT IN THERE TOO?
WHAT YOU GOT FOR ME?

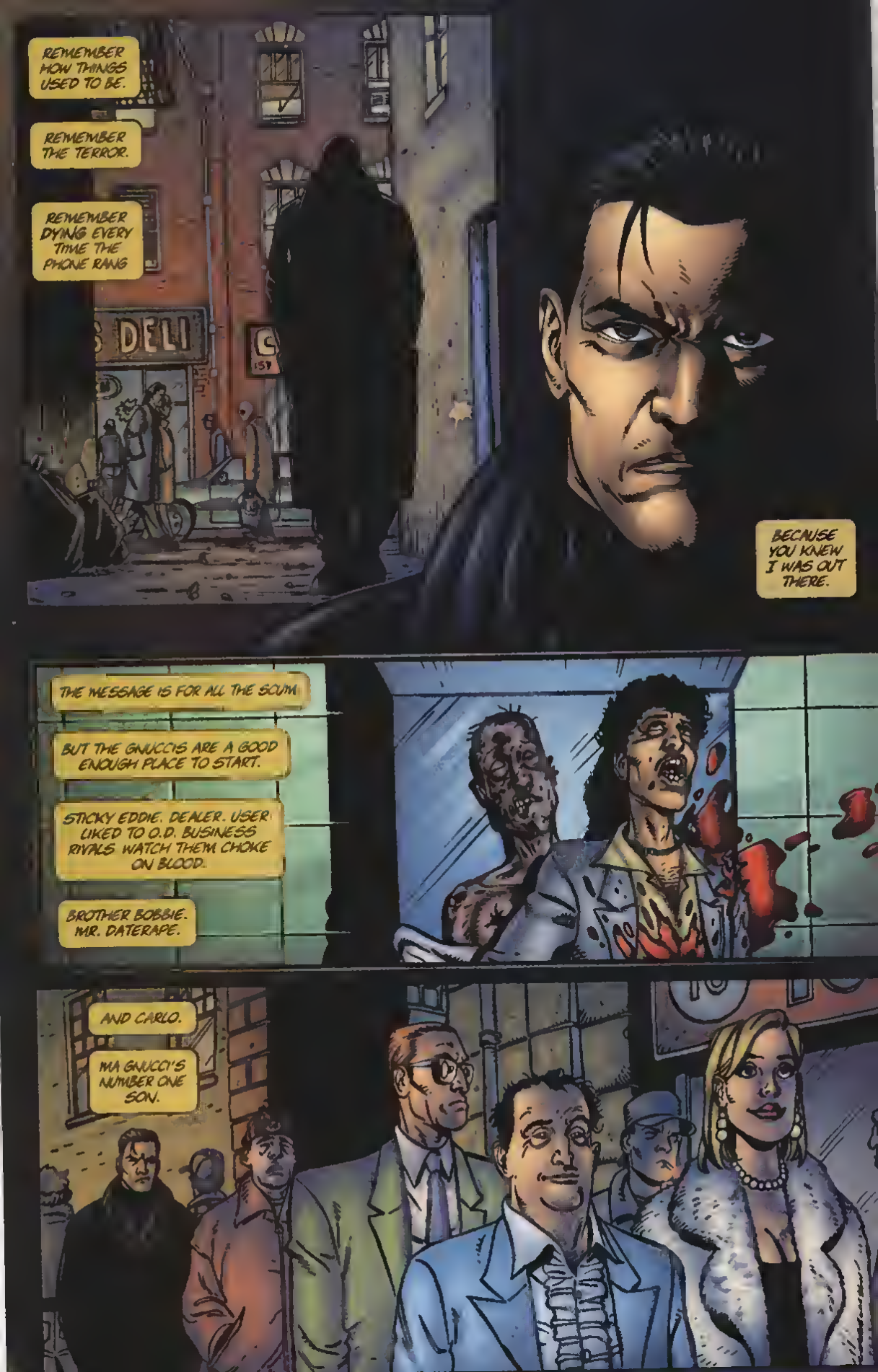

B-B-BUT HOW AM I GONNA BREATHE, MAN?
WANT ME TO SHOOT A COUPLE OF AIRHOLES?
YE--
NO!
I'LL BE FINE, MAN! DON'T WORRY ABOUT A THING!
GET LOST, BOZO.
YEAH, DISAPPEAR. WE GOT A MAN IN HERE IN NEED OF A LITTLE PRIVACY.
YOU DEAF OR SOMETHIN'? YOU KNOW WHO THAT IS IN THERE?
OUR BOSS IS VERY BEREAVED RIGHT NOW, BOZO. I WAS YOU, I'D VANISH BEFORE HE COMES OUT HERE AN' SHARES HIS GRIEF WITH THE FIRST SAP HE LAYS EYES ON, YOU KNOW?
HOLY --


OH, NO.
OH, YES.
FIRST THING THEY DO IS FREEZE.
LIKE ALWAYS.
SO NUMBER ONE'S A FREEBIE.


THEN THEY WAKE UP.
FREAK OUT.
GET HIM!
FOR THE REST I PAY FULL PRICE.
DOWN!
WAAAGHH!
PUNISHER, YOU PSYCHO! YOU ARE DEAD!


AAAAAHH! NO! AAAAIIEEEE!
DIE, FREAKSHOW!
DIE! DIE! DIE!
LET'S DO IT! C'MON! LET'S GO!
GUNFIGHT IN THE MORGUE, RULE ONE:
DON'T HIDE BEHIND THE THIN GUY.


OH, DEAR LORD, NOT ME, NO NO NO NO --
RULE TWO:
SHUT UP.
GOT A MESSAGE FOR YOUR PEOPLE, BOBBIE.
LISTEN:


REMEMBER HOW THINGS USED TO BE.
REMEMBER THE TERROR.
REMEMBER DYING EVERY TIME THE PHONE RANG
DELI
157
BECAUSE YOU KNEW I WAS OUT THERE.
THE MESSAGE IS FOR ALL THE SCUM
BUT THE GNUCCIS ARE A GOOD ENOUGH PLACE TO START.
STICKY EDDIE. DEALER. USER LIKED TO O.D. BUSINESS RIVALS WATCH THEM CHOKE ON BLOOD.
BROTHER BOBBIE. MR. DATERAPE.
AND CARLO.
MA GNUCCI'S NUMBER ONE SON.


BEEN TAILING HIM SINCE HE LEFT THE COWGIRL CLUB
DOING THE TOWN. CAN'T HAVE HEARD ABOUT BOBBIE YET.
WHERE ARE YOU GOING, PUNK?
...PERFECT.
HUNDRED AND FOURTH FLOOR DECK IS CLOSED TONIGHT.
UNLESS YOU'RE CARLO. YOU SETTLE FOR THE REGULAR VIEW.
HE SLIPS THE MANAGER AN ENVELOPE. GETS A SMILE, A NOD AND THE KEY TO THE AUXILIARY ELEVATOR.
HE'S LOOKING FOR A THRILL


DON'T YOU BE COMIN' UP HERE, BRUNO! AN' SEE NO ONE ELSE DOES NEITHER!
YOU GOT THAT?
DEAF JERK.
HOW 'BOUT THAT VIEW, BABY?
IT'S AMAZING, CARLO!
DAMN RIGHT IT IS! ALL 'EM OTHER MOOKS GOTTA CROWD TOGETHER DOWN THERE. ALL 'EM SIGHTSEEIN' MORONS PACKED IN WIT' THEIR NOSES STUCK IN EACH OTHER'S ARMPITS — BUT NOT US!
YOU STICK WIT' DADDY, BABY. I'LL KEEP YOU AWAY FROM ALLA THAT TRASH DOWN THERE.
YOU JUST REMEMBER THAT DADDY KNOWS BEST...


SO WE'RE UP HERE ALL ALONE, BABY.
YOU READY TO SHOW DADDY HOW GRATEFUL YOU ARE?
BABY?
OH, MY LORD, BABY! NO!
BABY --
YAAH --!


I CAUGHT A GLIMPSE OF HEAVEN ONCE


THE ANGELS SHOWED ME.
THE IDEA WAS I'D KILL FOR THEM.
CLEAN UP THEIR MISTAKES ON EARTH
EVENTUALLY REDEEM MYSELF.
TRIED IT.
DIDN'T LIKE IT.
SOOP'RE.!O.
TOLD THEM WHERE TO STICK IT.

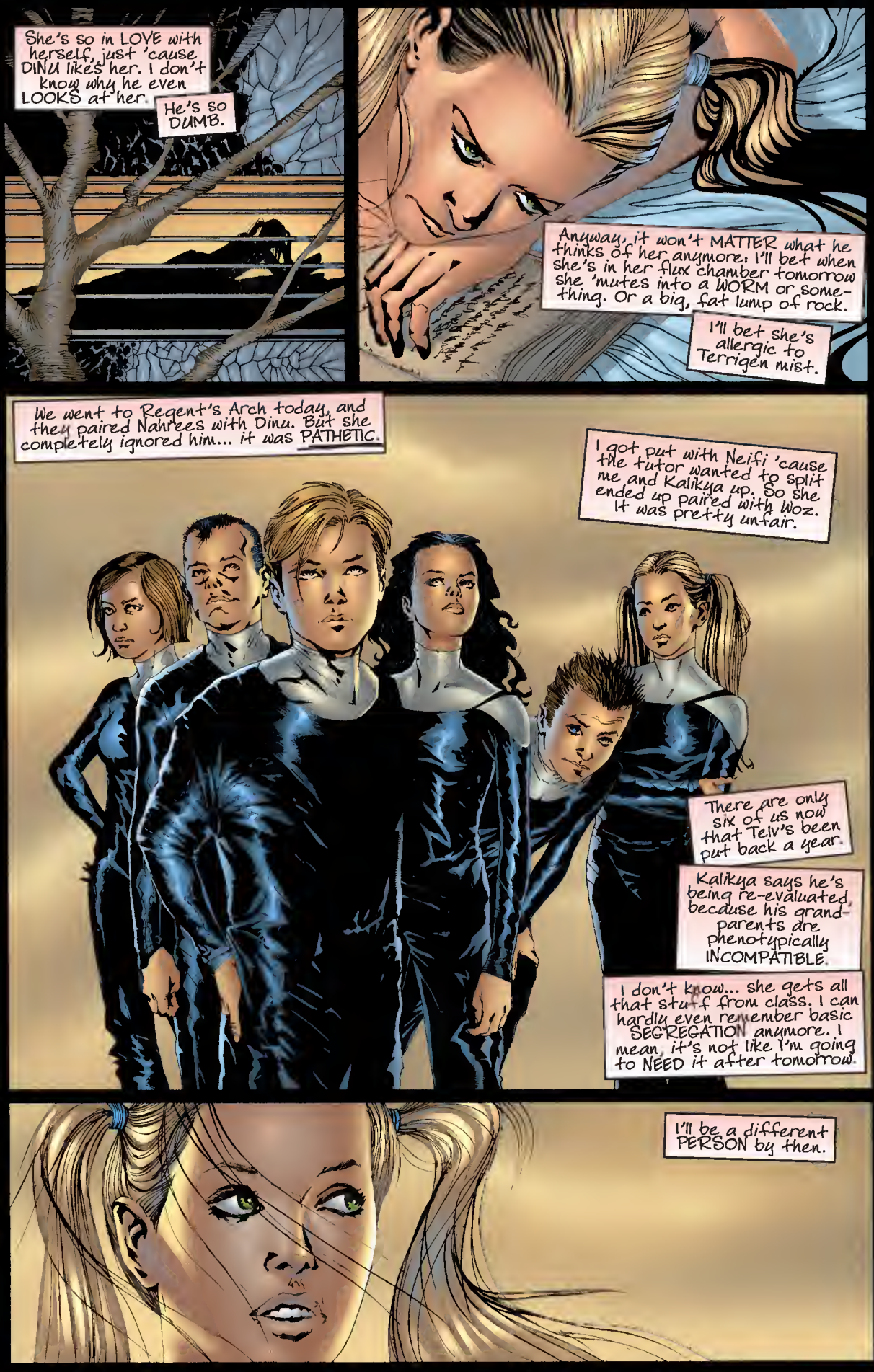

SO THEY BROUGHT ME UP TO HEAVEN. TO SEE WHAT I'D BE MISSING
A WIFE. A SON. A DAUGHTER
ALL FINALLY AT PEACE
I HADN'T SEEN THEM SINCE THEY BLED OUT IN MY ARMS
THEN I WAS CAST DOWN.
BACK TO A WORLD OF KILLERS. RAPISTS. PSYCHOS. PERVERTS. A BRAND NEW EVIL EVERY MINUTE, SPEWED OUT AS FAST AS MEN CAN THINK THEM UP.
A WORLD WHERE PITCHING A CRIMINAL DWARF OFF A SKYSCRAPER TO TELL HIS FELLOW SCUM YOU'RE BACK IS A SANE AND RATIONAL ACT.
THE ANGELS THOUGHT IT WOULD BE HELL FOR ME.
SPL
AA
BUT THEY WERE WRONG.

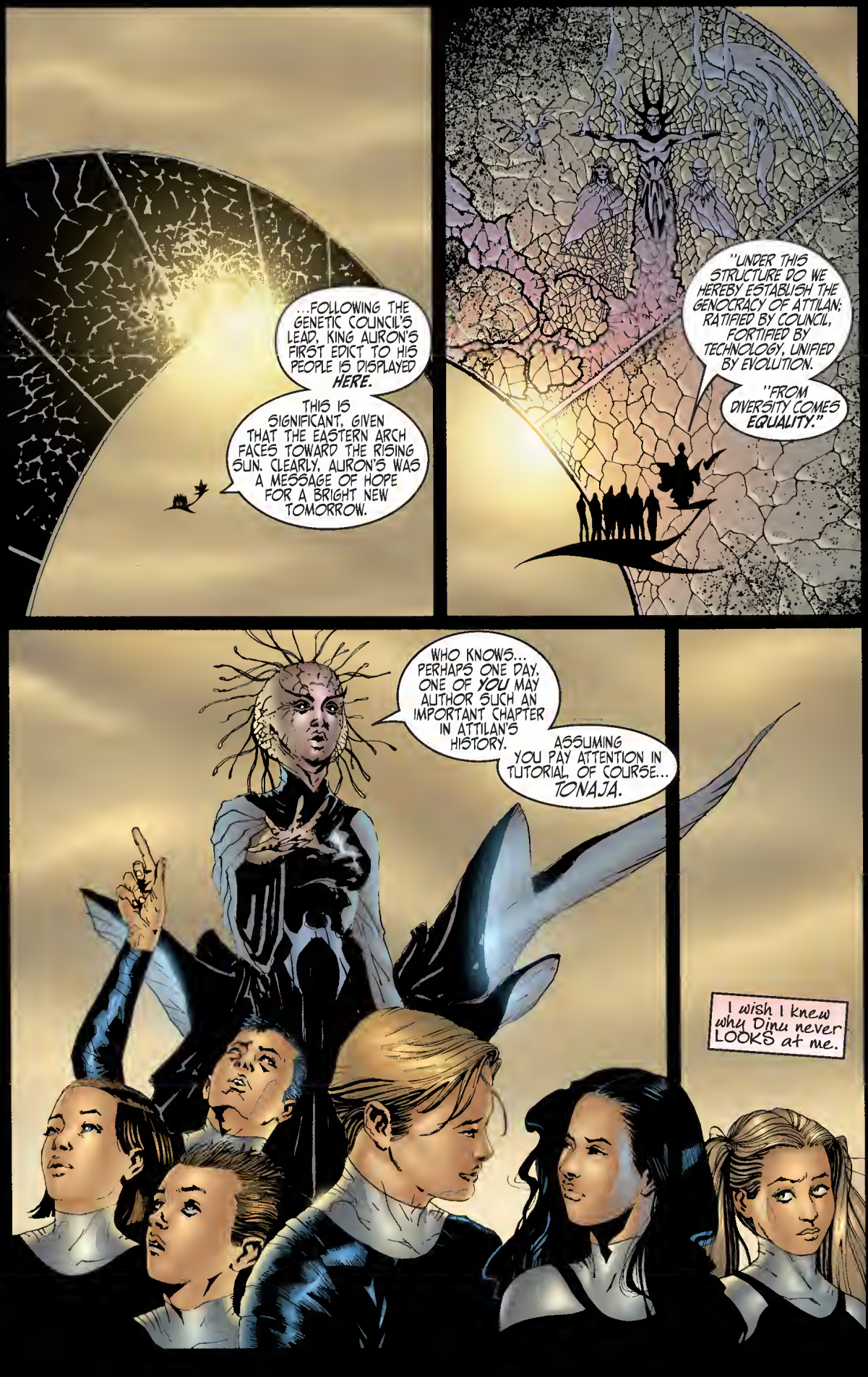

WELCOME BACK, FRANK.
SAYS NEW YORK CITY.

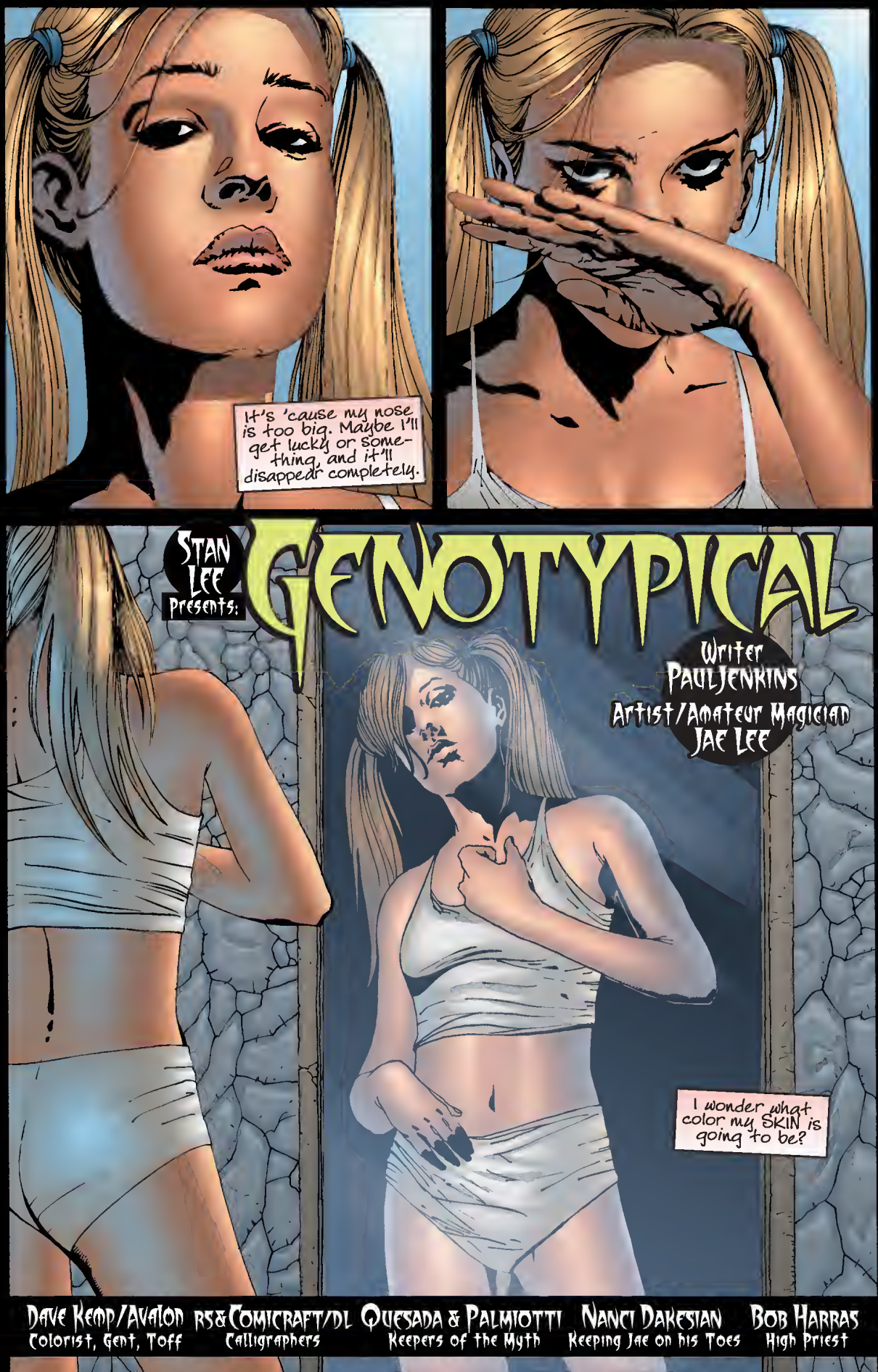

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She's so in LOVE with herself, just 'cause DINU likes her. I don't know why he even LOOKS at her.
He's so DUMB.
Anyway, it won't MATTER what he thinks of her anymore: I'll bet when she's in her flux chamber tomorrow she 'mutes into a WORM or something. Or a big, fat lump of rock.
I'll bet she's allergic to Terrigen mist.
We went to Regent's Arch today, and they paired Nahrees with Dinu. But she completely ignored him... it was PATHETIC.
I got put with Neifi 'cause the tutor wanted to split me and Kalikya up. So she ended up paired with Woz. It was pretty unfair.
There are only six of us now that Telv's been put back a year.
Kalikya says he's being re-evaluated because his grandparents are phenotypically INCOMPATIBLE.
I don't know... she gets all that stuff from class. I can hardly even remember basic SEGREGATION anymore. I mean, it's not like I'm going to NEED it after tomorrow.
I'll be a different PERSON by then.


...FOLLOWING THE GENETIC COUNCIL'S LEAD, KING AURON'S FIRST EDICT TO HIS PEOPLE IS DISPLAYED *HERE*.
THIS IS SIGNIFICANT, GIVEN THAT THE EASTERN ARCH FACES TOWARD THE RISING SUN. CLEARLY, AURON'S WAS A MESSAGE OF HOPE FOR A BRIGHT NEW TOMORROW.
"UNDER THIS STRUCTURE DO WE HEREBY ESTABLISH THE GENOCRACY OF ATTILAN; RATIFIED BY COUNCIL, FORTIFIED BY TECHNOLOGY, UNIFIED BY EVOLUTION.
"FROM DIVERSITY COMES *EQUALITY*."
WHO KNOWS... PERHAPS ONE DAY, ONE OF *YOU* MAY AUTHOR SUCH AN IMPORTANT CHAPTER IN ATTILAN'S HISTORY.
ASSUMING YOU PAY ATTENTION IN TUTORIAL, OF COURSE... *TONAJA*.
I wish I knew why Dinu never LOOKS at me.


It's 'cause my nose is too big. Maybe I'll get lucky or something, and it'll disappear completely.
STAN LEE PRESENTS:
GENOTYPICAL
Writer
PAUL JENKINS
Artist/Amateur Magician
JAE LEE
I wonder what color my SKIN is going to be?
DAVE KEMP/AVALON
Colorist, Gent, Toff
RS&COMICRAFT/DL
Calligraphers
QUESADA & PALMIOTTI
Keepers of the Myth
NANCI DAKESIAN
Keeping Jae on his Toes
BOB HARRAS
High Priest


HEEHH... THERE IT IS --
SHHH! YOU'LL WAKE HIM UP!
C'MON, NEIFI --
SHHH! SHPHSSS...!?
RR?
YEE-HAW!!
RRAUFF--!
PING
TCH. THEY ARE SO IMMATURE.

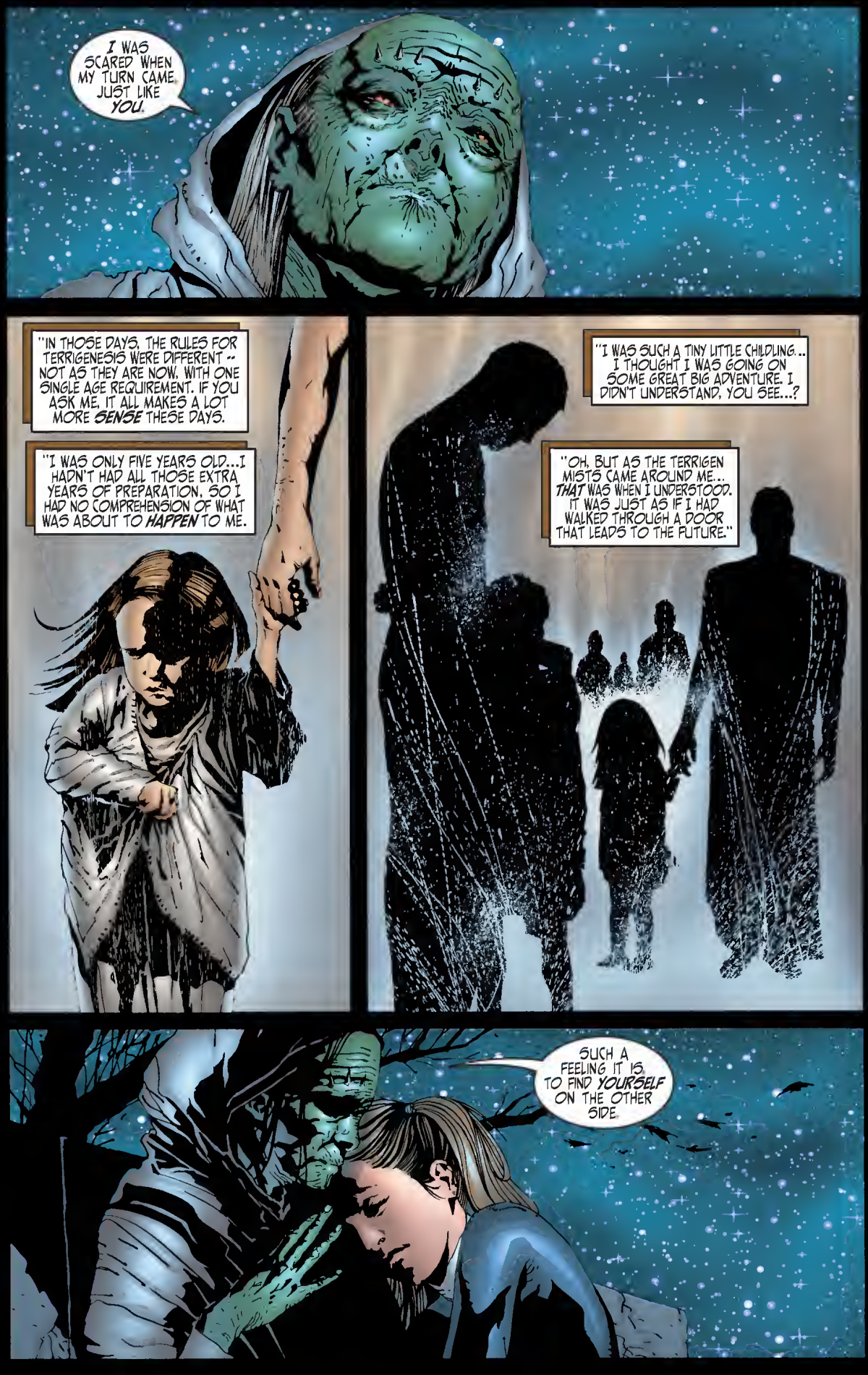

AW, C'MON, TONAJA...GET LIGHT. WE'VE GOT THE REST OF OUR LIVES TO BE SERIOUS.
YOU'RE JUST MAD 'CAUSE DINU WENT WITH NAHREES. EVERYONE KNOWS YOU LIKE HIM.
I DO NOT, DEWOZ. BESIDES, YOU WOULDN'T UNDERSTAND. YOU'RE NOT EVEN CUTE.
HEE! YEAH...
LET'S GO AN' THROW DYE IN THE FOUNTAINS.
THAT'S SO STUPID, WOZ. THEY DID THAT LAST YEAR.
WE GOTTA DO SOMETHING. IT'S OUR LAST NIGHT.
YOU CAN'T NOT DO A FINAL DARE, TONAJA. IT'S TRADITION --
'KAY. BUT WHAT'RE WE GONNA DO?
LET'S GO AN' SEE THE MADMAN.


You get in by the maze. Anyone can do it -- you just have to know where to GO. The guards never see you, 'cause they're too busy watching for people trying to get OUT.
Woz pretended he didn't know the way, just because he was SCARED. Me an' Kalikya went up into the air ducts right beside each other.
She's my best friend FOREVER.
D'YOU SEE ANY-THING?
SHH. THERE HE IS.


NN -- YOU THINK YOU'RE SO CLEVER, DON'T YOU? BUT I SEE THROUGH YOUR AMATEURISH CHARADE, BLACK BOLT.
SHUT YOUR EYES TIGHT ENOUGH AND YOU CAN BLIND YOURSELF TO REALITY, EH? EVEN WHEN REALITY BURNS...
WAH... WAH... MAXIMUS IS BEING MEAN TO ME. SOMEONE TELL HIM TO STOP.
WHAT'S HE DOING?
DON'T YOU KNOW? HE ONLY TALKS TO HIMSELF.
I'M KING! I'M KING!
EVERY-ONE'S IN TERRIBLE DANGER -- THERE'S A FLAW!
WHY WON'T YOU LISTEN TO ME?


I HATE THIS. THIS IS CREEPY.
Y-YEAH. WE SHOULD GET OUT OF HERE.
C'MON, WOZ...WE'RE LEAVING. YOU COMING?
HELLO, WOZ.

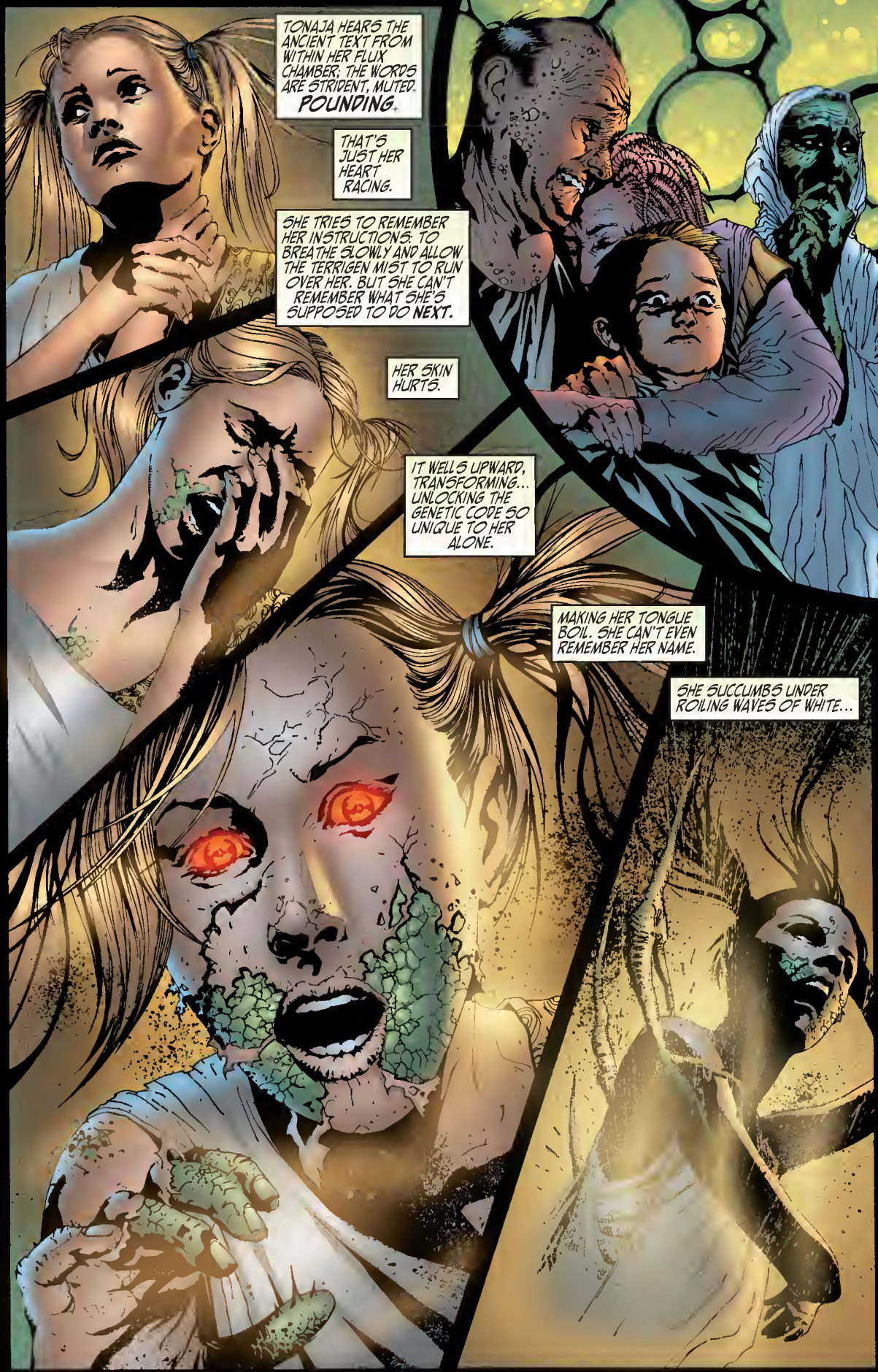

I'M SCARED, GRANDMOTHER.
THERE'S NO REASON TO BE AFRAID, TONAJA. EVERYONE CHANGES...THAT'S HOW THE WORLD WORKS.
B-BUT I DON'T WANT ANYTHING TO CHANGE. WHY DOES IT HAVE TO?
WHY DON'T YOU ASK ME AGAIN AFTER TOMORROW.

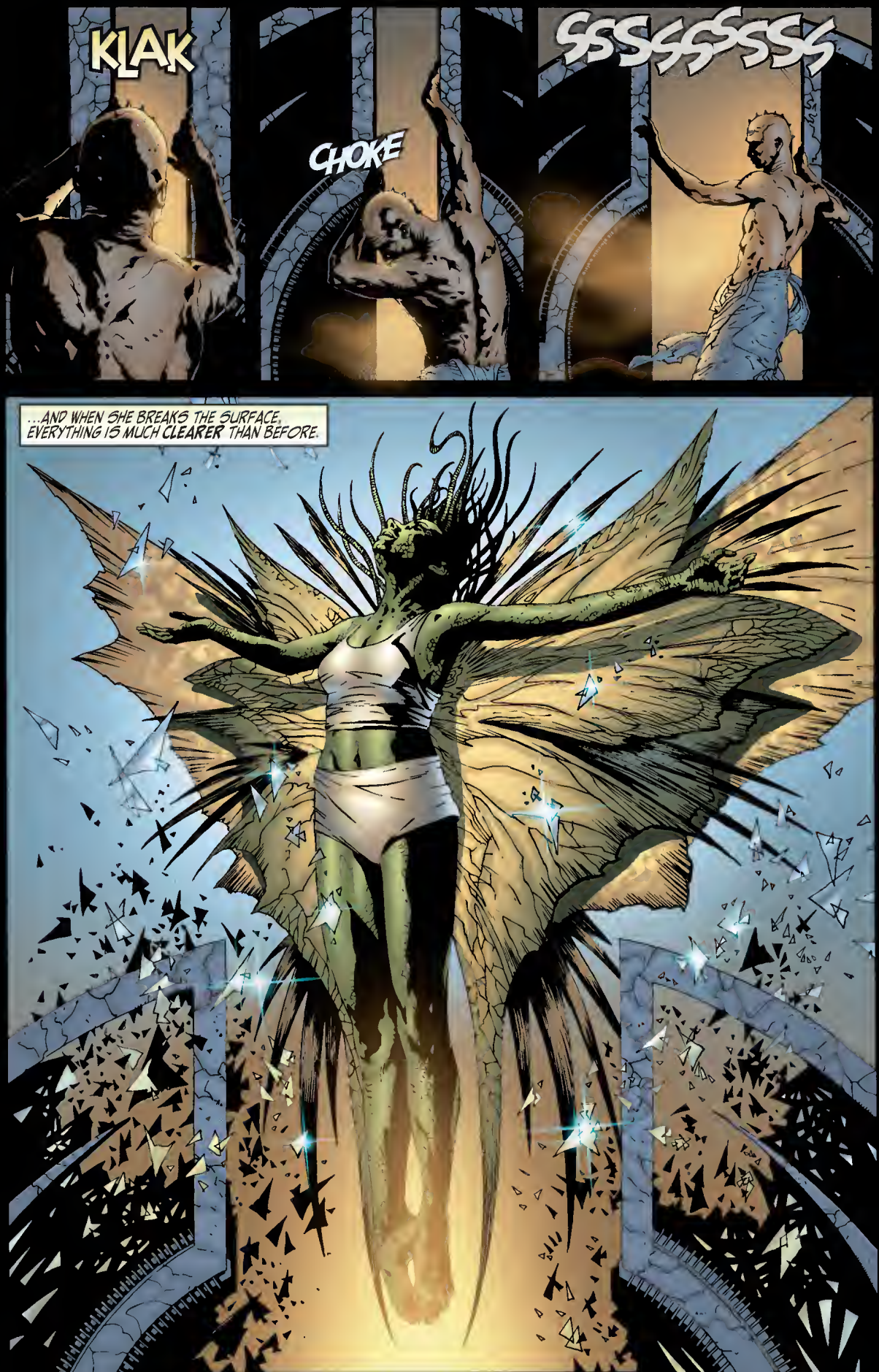

I WAS SCARED WHEN MY TURN CAME, JUST LIKE YOU.
"IN THOSE DAYS, THE RULES FOR TERRIGENESIS WERE DIFFERENT -- NOT AS THEY ARE NOW, WITH ONE SINGLE AGE REQUIREMENT. IF YOU ASK ME, IT ALL MAKES A LOT MORE SENSE THESE DAYS.
"I WAS ONLY FIVE YEARS OLD...I HADN'T HAD ALL THOSE EXTRA YEARS OF PREPARATION, SO I HAD NO COMPREHENSION OF WHAT WAS ABOUT TO HAPPEN TO ME.
"I WAS SUCH A TINY LITTLE CHILDLING... I THOUGHT I WAS GOING ON SOME GREAT BIG ADVENTURE. I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND, YOU SEE...?
"OH, BUT AS THE TERRIGEN MISTS CAME AROUND ME... THAT WAS WHEN I UNDERSTOOD. IT WAS JUST AS IF I HAD WALKED THROUGH A DOOR THAT LEADS TO THE FUTURE."
SUCH A FEELING IT IS TO FIND YOURSELF ON THE OTHER SIDE.


THINK OF ALL THOSE POOR PEOPLE OUT THERE, CHILDKIN. BEYOND THE BARRIERS. CONSIDER HOW LUCKY YOU ARE.
THOSE POOR HUMANS NEVER REALIZE THEIR POTENTIAL -- THEY ARE SO SAD AND ALIKE. IT MUST BE TERRIBLY FRIGHTENING FOR THEM.
BUT WHAT IF --
DON'T SAY IT. WHATEVER HAPPENS WE WILL ALWAYS LOVE YOU.
BUT --
NO. TO SPEAK OF SUCH THINGS INVITES DISASTER, CHILDKIN. YOU MUST HAVE FAITH IN THE STRENGTH OF YOUR LINEAGE.
I'M SO SCARED.
I KNOW.


...AND THUS, WE OFFER THOSE WHO NOW GRADUATE FROM CHILDHOOD THE GIFT OF *TRANSFORMATION*.
DO YOU ENTER THE TERRIGEN MISTS OF YOUR OWN FREE WILL? AND IN SO DOING, DO YOU TAKE THE FIRST STEP INTO ADULTHOOD?
WE DO.
WE DO.
THEN, UNDER THE EYES OF YOUR KING, STEP FORWARD...
...AND ACCEPT THE BURDEN OF *HEREDITY*.

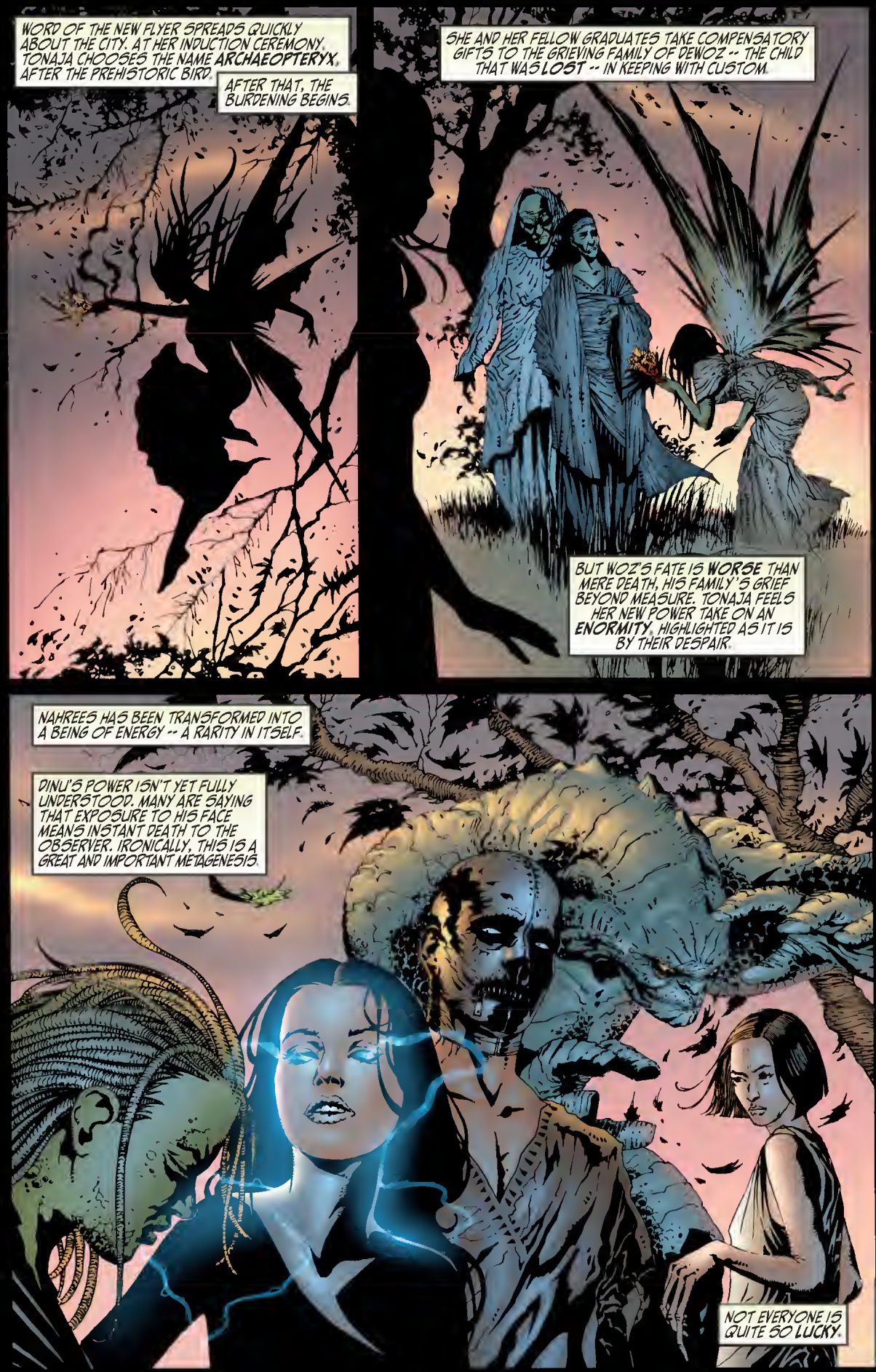

And Randac spake to the people of the great city, saying "Ours are now the laws of artificial selection, mutation, and evolution...
OH! LOOK! THERE HE GOES...
"...take this catalyst that is called Terrigen, for it will give you genomorphology."
And he put the mist into a glass chamber. And the people entered the chamber, and were transmuted.
And lo! Only when the people of the city were immersed in mist did they then see CLEARLY for the first time.


TONAJA HEARS THE ANCIENT TEXT FROM WITHIN HER FLUX CHAMBER; THE WORDS ARE STRIDENT, MUTED. POUNDING.
THAT'S JUST HER HEART RACING.
SHE TRIES TO REMEMBER HER INSTRUCTIONS: TO BREATHE SLOWLY AND ALLOW THE TERRIGEN MIST TO RUN OVER HER. BUT SHE CAN'T REMEMBER WHAT SHE'S SUPPOSED TO DO NEXT.
HER SKIN HURTS.
IT WELLS UPWARD, TRANSFORMING... UNLOCKING THE GENETIC CODE SO UNIQUE TO HER ALONE.
MAKING HER TONGUE BOIL. SHE CAN'T EVEN REMEMBER HER NAME.
SHE SUCCUMBS UNDER ROILING WAVES OF WHITE...


KLAK
CHOKE
SSSSSSSS
...AND WHEN SHE BREAKS THE SURFACE, EVERYTHING IS MUCH CLEARER THAN BEFORE.


THERE ARE NO OTHERS SUCH AS SHE. THIS IS HER MOMENT... THE TIME SHE WAS BORN FOR.
SHE SOARS, TESTING HER POTENTIAL, LEARNING THE SPAN OF HER WINGS.
THE AIR RUFFLING HER VESTIGIAL NECK FEATHERS IS A FAMILIAR FRIEND.
LOOK, DARLING -- A FLYER! JUST LIKE YOU.
YES! ABOUT BLOODY TIME!
SHE SKIRTS N-SPACE, FLIRTING WITH DANGER, BUT COMPLETELY IN CONTROL. FROM THIS PERSPECTIVE, SHE SEES THE CITY THE WAY SHE KNOWS IT IS MEANT TO BE SEEN.
BUT SHE KNOWS SOMETHING ELSE -- THAT SHE'S GOING TO HAVE TO COME BACK DOWN TO EARTH. ALREADY, SHE UNDERSTANDS HER DUTY.
ALL OF THIS SHE UNDERSTANDS, BECAUSE SHE IS THE FIRST NATURALLY-EVOLVED FLYER IN THIRTY YEARS.


OH, TONAJA... IT'S MORE THAN WE COULD HAVE HOPED FOR. OUR DAUGHTER... A FLYER!
YOU LOOK BIG.
TONAJA! TONAJA!
NEIFI? IS THAT YOU?
I CAN'T BELIEVE IT'S YOU --
YOU SHOULD SEE NAHREES -- IT'S INCREDIBLE! SHE'S GOT THIS ELECTRICITY THING AROUND HER. AND KALIKYA'S HANDS ARE ALL FUNNY.
AND I DIDN'T SEE DINU BUT HE'S GOT ALL THESE PEOPLE RUSHING AROUND HIS FLUX CHAMBER. HE CAN'T COME OUT. THEY SAID IT WAS SOME THING TO DO WITH HIS FACE --
WHAT ABOUT WOZ?
Oh.


WORD OF THE NEW FLYER SPREADS QUICKLY ABOUT THE CITY. AT HER INDUCTION CEREMONY, TONAJA CHOOSES THE NAME **ARCHAEOPTERYX**, AFTER THE PREHISTORIC BIRD.
AFTER THAT, THE BURDENING BEGINS.
SHE AND HER FELLOW GRADUATES TAKE COMPENSATORY GIFTS TO THE GRIEVING FAMILY OF DEWOZ -- THE CHILD THAT WAS **LOST** -- IN KEEPING WITH CUSTOM.
BUT WOZ'S FATE IS **WORSE** THAN MERE DEATH. HIS FAMILY'S GRIEF BEYOND MEASURE. TONAJA FEELS HER NEW POWER TAKE ON AN **ENORMITY**, HIGHLIGHTED AS IT IS BY THEIR DESPAIR.
NAHREES HAS BEEN TRANSFORMED INTO A BEING OF ENERGY -- A RARITY IN ITSELF.
DINU'S POWER ISN'T YET FULLY UNDERSTOOD. MANY ARE SAYING THAT EXPOSURE TO HIS FACE MEANS INSTANT DEATH TO THE OBSERVER. IRONICALLY, THIS IS A GREAT AND IMPORTANT METAGENESIS.
NOT EVERYONE IS QUITE SO **LUCKY**.


SO, um... NAHREES LOOKS GOOD.
YEAH. SHE AND I MIGHT BE ASSIGNED TO THE ROYAL GUARD.
THAT'LL BE, um... NICE.
I WISH I HADN'T... YOU KNOW...
I WISH I HADN'T DISAPPOINTED EVERYONE.
TON... YOU THINK MAYBE WE CAN STILL SEE EACH OTHER SOMETIMES?
I DON'T THINK SO.


THE CITY FALLS SILENT. WHERE THERE WAS BRIEF EXCITEMENT, THE PEOPLE ARE NOW SUBDUED AND FEARFUL.
KING BLACK BOLT PONDERS THE WEEK'S DISTURBING EVENTS: HOW THE TRIUMPHANT ARRIVAL OF THE FLYER HAS BEEN DIMINISHED BY TRAGEDY.
HOW THE FATE OF THE BOYCHILD, DEWOZ, HAS CAST A PALL OVER THE CELEBRATIONS.
FOR ALL CITIZENS, WHOSE ADULT LIVES ARE PREDICTED BY QUIRKS OF THEIR GENETIC MAKEUP, EVERYTHING MUST CHANGE. BUT NOW, THEY FALTER.
POSSIBLY -- JUST POSSIBLY -- THEY HAVE TAKEN A STEP CLOSER TO THEIR HUMAN COUSINS. PERHAPS, THEY REALIZE, NOT ALL CHANGE IS FOR THE BEST.
A FLAW HAS APPEARED.
A CRACK IN THE SMOOTH SURFACE OF UTOPIA.


UNEXPECTEDLY, THE PEOPLE OF ATTILAN ARE FORCED TO CONFRONT A DARK PERIOD IN THEIR HISTORY. THE UGLY TRUTH RE-EMERGES, SEETHING...
THERE IS NOW A LIVING REMINDER, ONE THAT SHAKES THE FOUNDATION OF THEIR GENETIC SUPERIORITY TO ITS VERY CORE.
SLEEP WELL, BOY.
AN INHUMAN, TRANSFORMED INTO AN ALPHA PRIMITIVE.


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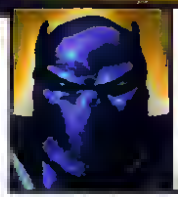
BLACK PANTHER



With the sleekness of the jungle cat whose name he bears, **T'Challa-the Prince of Wakanda**-stalks both the concrete of the city and the undergrowth of the **Veldt**. So it has been for countless generations of warrior kings, so it is today-and so it shall be for as long as the law of the jungle dictates that only the swift, the smart, and the strong survive.

PREVIOUSLY IN ... BLACK PANTHER

BLACK PANTHER/ T'CHALLA



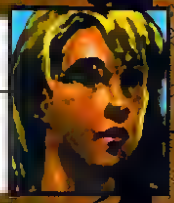
A former member of the *Avengers*, he is the ruler of Wakanda, one of the few places in the world where the precious metal, Vibranium, is mined

EVERETT K. ROSS



State Department attaché assigned to escort *T'Challa* during his stay in the United States.

NIKKI ADAMS



Everett's boss at The State Department.

ZURI



Mentor and companion to T'Challa whose duty and loyalty date back to the Panther's father *T'Chaka*.

THE DORA MILAJE— OKOYE & NAKIA



T'Challa's chauffeur and Personal Assistant, who also serve as his bodyguards.

MEPHISTO



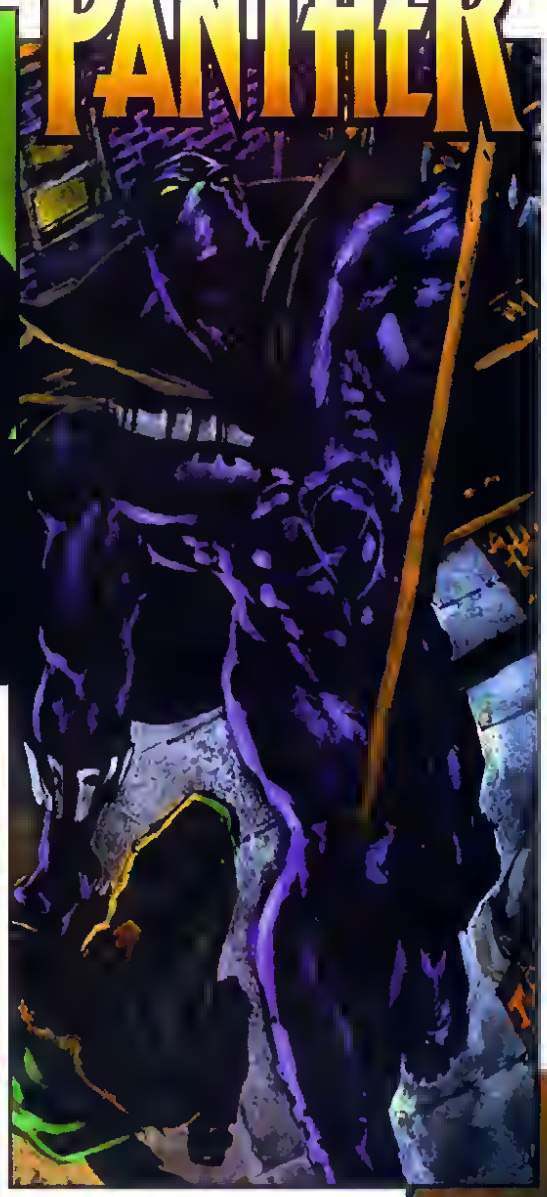
The Bad Guy



T'Challa traveled to the United States to investigate alleged financial embezzlement and the death of a young girl in connection with his organization, The Tomorrow Fund.

To further his investigation into the murder, the Black Panther enlisted the aid of a local drug czar.





Meanwhile, after his first day on the job, Everett had a very surprising visitor.

Design by COMICRAFT's Eric Eng Wong


THE STORY THUS FAR:
Five minutes before, I was hunting BUSTER, the Jerry Seinfeld of lower income housing rats, while listening to ZURI ramble on about the Wakandan kingdom's great history.
The CLIENT -- the king of Wakanda -- had earlier tugged on a kitty-cat mask and jumped out a window, leaving me, Everett K. Ross, America's WHITEST MAN, alone in the Leslie N. Hill Housing Project.
Which was right when the DEVIL dropped by.

THE ADVOCATE'S DEVIL



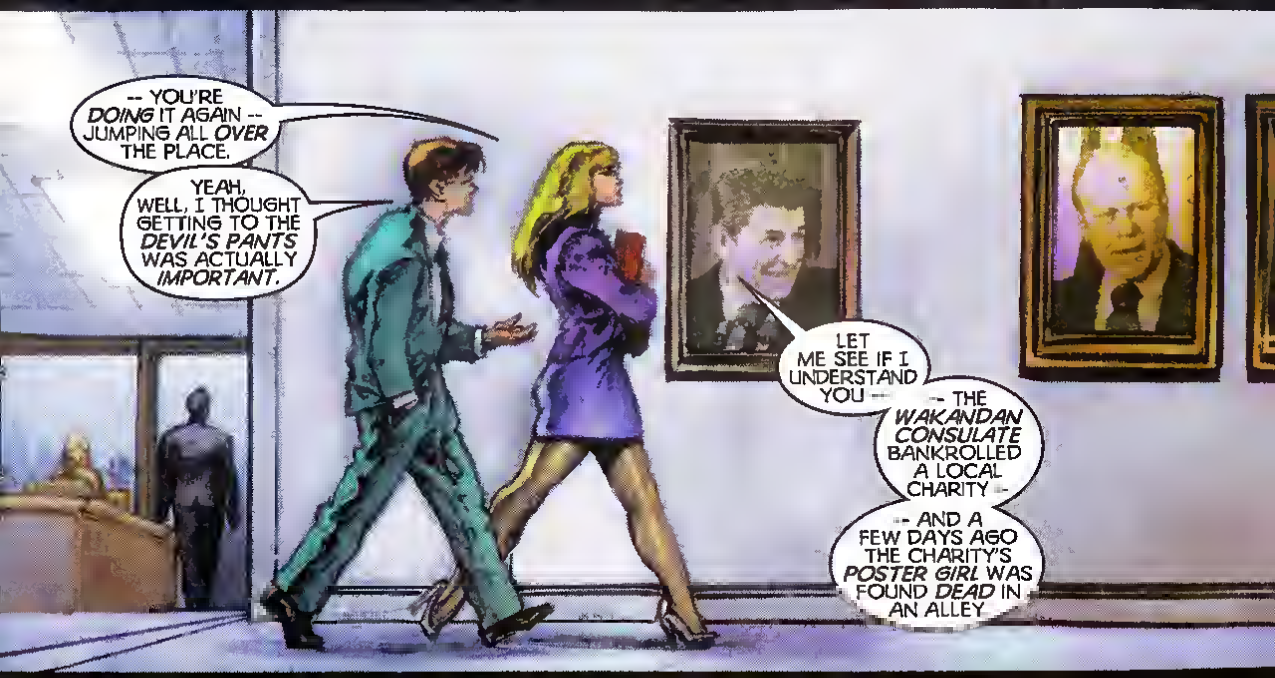

AND, SO...
Much later, I learned what was holding the client up.
KKRREEAASSHH
He was busy taking a gang-banger's Pony –


-- and DUMPING it into the EAST RIVER.
It was the SIXTH local hood the Panther rousted that night. He was setting up his own INTELLIGENCE NETWORK --
-- RECRUITING his operatives with gentle coercion...
SPLAASSHH
WE WILL HAVE AN UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN US MARVIN. SPEAK OF IT TO NO MAN.
<REPORT.>
<WE HAVE CONFISCATED THEIR DRUGS AND WEAPONS, MY LORD. AND DELIVERED THEIR CURRENCY TO A HOMELESS SHELTER AS AN ANONYMOUS DONATION.>
<YOU DID NOT KILL THE DRUG DEALERS --?>
<NO.>


The DORA MILAJE, or "adored ones," were the client's... concomitants. Soon as I know what that actually means, I'll get back to you. He spoke to them exclusively in Hausa and, as far as I could tell, they spoke only to HIM.
They were Amazonian teenage karate chicks from two Wakandan tribes. Keeping them in his family as potential WIVES somehow kept the PEACE between the city dwellers and the tribal factions of the client's kingdom.
Which, no matter HOW you looked at it, made the client the luckiest guy on the face of the Earth.
<WE DID NOT KILL THEM, MY LORD.>
<THERE WERE, HOWEVER, MANY INJURIES.>
<INJURIES DO NOT CONCERN US. REMEMBER, NAKIA, WE ARE GUESTS IN THIS PLACE.>
<WE WOULD DO WELL TO OBEY THEIR CUSTOMS. WERE THIS WAKANDA, AND A MAN DARED RAISE A HAND TO THE DORA MILAJE -->"
<-- THEY WOULD NOW BE WITH THEIR ANCESTORS, HOWEVER -->
<-- WHEN IN ROME, WE SHALL ACT AS ROMANS.>
<OKOYE, BELOVED -- TO THE PRISON.>
*DOR-ah mah-LAH-jay
-- J & J.

NOT TODAY


PEZ --?
YOU SAY THEY TOOK YOUR PANTS.
-- ?!
Ah -- YES, THAT IS ACCURATE.
SO I SEE.
Ah... YOU... YOU'RE NOT...
...I MEAN, YOU AREN'T...
NO.
AT LEAST NOT TODAY.
A GIFT THEN.
TO MAKE YOU MORE COMFORTABLE WHILE WE AWAIT YOUR MASTER'S RETURN.
-- ?! HEY --
-- HEY THANKS --
-- YOU CAN'T IMAGINE HOW --
YES I CAN.
OH -- DHUH -- LOOK WHO I'M TALKING TO! I REALLY APPRECIATE --
My god. Oh, my sweet lord.
I'd just sold my soul for a pair of pants.
I was wearing the Devil's Pants...
"ROSS -- ROSS --"


-- YOU'RE DOING IT AGAIN -- JUMPING ALL OVER THE PLACE.
YEAH, WELL, I THOUGHT GETTING TO THE DEVIL'S PANTS WAS ACTUALLY IMPORTANT.
LET ME SEE IF I UNDERSTAND YOU --
-- THE WAKANDAN CONSULATE BANKROLLED A LOCAL CHARITY --
-- AND A FEW DAYS AGO THE CHARITY'S POSTER GIRL WAS FOUND DEAD IN AN ALLEY

AH


Wakan
An Avenger
King becomes
in a stateside scandal.
the mask been lifted from
Wakanda's squeaky-clean,
fairy-tale like history?
The growing scandal surrounding
The Tomorrow Fund exploded
today, as investigators reported
rampant mismanagement of funds,
including federal matching grants,
targeted for needy children in the New Lo
section of Brooklyn. New York. While
official number has been released, sour
within the New York Inspector Gene
office estimate as much as $7.5 million d
may have been embezzled from TTF
that TTF's accounts may have been u
money laundering and drug trafficki
community self-help org
years ago, th
grant pro


"SO THE WAKANDAN KING DECIDES TO COME TO TOWN --
"-- AND YOU STUPIDLY GO GET HIM IN YOUR 2-SEATER MIATA."
GET DOWN BOOGIE! GET DOWN

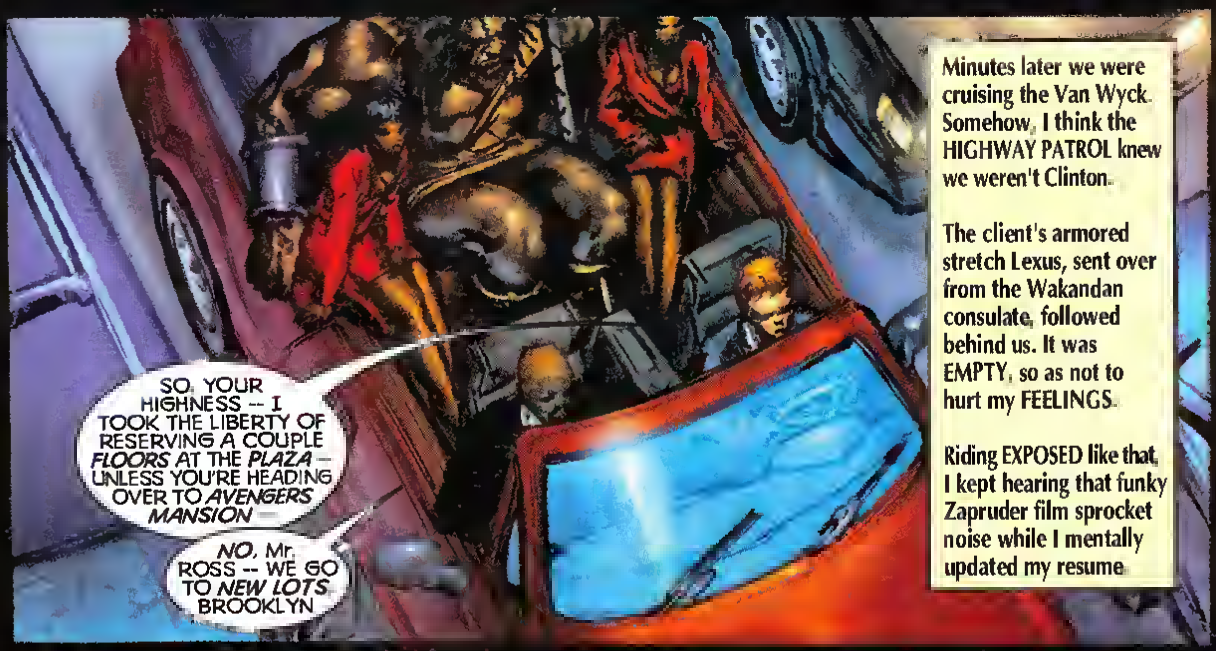

AFRICAN AIR
Ah --


ELAYNE -- CHANGE OF PLAN HE BROUGHT, LIKE EVERYBODY.
SWEAR TO GOD, I'M LOOKING FOR BUSTER CRABBE TO SWING BY ANY SECOND NOW.
I DON'T GET IT -- HE USUALLY COMES ALONE.
ROLL THOSE LIMOS WE HAD ON STANDBY AND GET THE HIGHWAY PATROL TO CLEAR US ALL THE WAY TO THE MIDTOWN TUNNEL.
TELL'EM IT'S CLINTON.
LIKE LAST TIME.
Departures
PARK
TREACHERY!
KEE RRA SHH
AND, Uh, SEND OVER A STACK OF VOUCHERS LOOKS LIKE OCP WILL BE REDECORATING KENNEDY'S VEEP LOUNGE.
*Office of the Chief of Protocol, Veep= V.I.P. -- J&J
FORGE NIKKI'S NAME. SHE LIKES TO FEEL IMPORTANT.
OCP files said ZURI was a close friend of T'CHAKA, the client's father and previous king of Wakanda.
OUT OF MY WAY, MAGGOT.
The tribal equivalent of the crazy uncle who keeps running over your skateboard with his truck.
Then there were the DORA MILAJE, who spoke only to the client --
Ah... HOW-DEE.
-- and who might've ripped my LUNGS out for trying to get near him.


ACHEVE.
T'Challa was king of the most advanced nation on the African continent, and possibly the world. The client had been king since his late teens -- no small accomplishment in a world of revolving-door despots.
He was sitting alone, somewhere near the HOLE that USED to be a TV set, staring at a credit card. For about ten seconds he looked like the loneliest guy in the world. And then I realized he wasn't so much LONELY as he was ANGRY.
From childhood, he'd been taught to keep a lid on his emotions, and he got so good at it that you might misread restraint for indifference. The discipline was to always be one step ahead of the next guy. Being caught unawares was an indignity the client couldn't afford. And that's what that face was --
-- the quiet indignity of getting some really bad news.
A name I didn't recognize, but the splintering of the world's greatest poker face said it all.
HE WAITED UNTIL YOU'D LEFT, T'CHALLA -- SYMPATHIZERS INSIDE CENTRAL WAKANDA SABOTAGED THE DEFENSE GRIDS --
I'LL RETURN AT ONCE, MOTHER --
AND DO WHAT, T'CHALLA? FIGHT? SO MORE INNOCENTS CAN DIE?
DON'T YOU THINK HE WANTS YOU DEAD, THAT'S JUST WHAT T'CHALLA. I'M SURE HE'S GOT GOONS WAITING FOR YOU THERE IN NEW YORK.
HE WANTS?
YOUR FATHER TAUGHT YOU ALL THAT WARRIOR NONSENSE -- BUT HE ALSO TAUGHT YOU HOW TO THINK.
DON'T FIGHT THIS WAR WITH GUNS, T'CHALLA


...Ah... YOUR HIGHNESS --?
-- EVERETT K. ROSS, OCP.
I'LL BE YOUR STATE DEPARTMENT ATTACHE DURING THIS VISIT. I BROUGHT MY CAR BUT IT'S A LITTLE TOO --
Blood in the streets. Always a SPECIAL treat.
Pinned between the MANIAC and the ICICLE, I suddenly realized --
TREACHERY!!
HOW SOON MAY WE DEPART FOR WAKANDA, MY LIEGE?!
THERE SHALL BE BLOOD FLOWING IN THE STREETS!
-- they were BOTH feeling the SAME thing.
WE HAVE A MISSION HERE, OLD FRIEND. A CHILD HAS DIED.
AND MANY OF OUR CHILDREN MAY DIE AS WELL MY LIEGE!
ALL THE MORE REASON FOR OUR PATIENCE. YES?
Mr. ROSS HERE HAS KINDLY PROVIDED US TRANSPORTATION.
Ah ACTUALLY YOUR HIGHNESS MY CAR ISN'T ADEQUATE TO --
NONSENSE. IT WOULD BE AN INSULT TO NOT ACCEPT YOUR KINDNESS
WE RIDE WITH YOU.

MANSIONS


SO, YOUR HIGHNESS -- I TOOK THE LIBERTY OF RESERVING A COUPLE *FLOORS* AT THE *PLAZA* -- UNLESS YOU'RE HEADING OVER TO *AVENGERS MANSION* --
NO, Mr. ROSS -- WE GO TO *NEW LOTS* BROOKLYN
Minutes later we were cruising the Van Wyck. Somehow, I think the HIGHWAY PATROL knew we weren't Clinton.
The client's armored stretch Lexus, sent over from the Wakandan consulate, followed behind us. It was EMPTY, so as not to hurt my FEELINGS.
Riding EXPOSED like that, I kept hearing that funky Zapruder film sprocket noise while I mentally updated my resume.


Oh -- THE *TOMORROW FUND* HQ -- WANT TO GET STARTED RIGHT *AWAY*. Huh?
FINE -- JUST TELL ME WHERE TO FORWARD YOUR *LUGGAGE* --


WE SHALL *ALL* BE *STAYING* IN NEW LOTS.
Back...and to the left...
Oh, THAT'S A GOOD ONE, YOUR HIGHNESS --
-- YOU -- YOU *ARE* JOKING RIGHT --?
Back...and to the left...
...Back...and to the left...

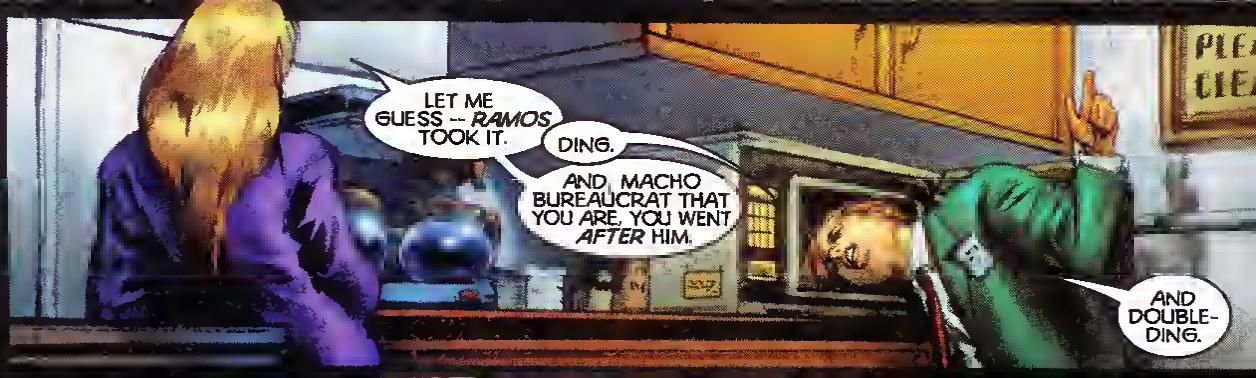

SO, YOUR CLIENT OPTS TO SLEEP IN A *HOUSING PROJECT* OVER A LUXURY HOTEL
RIGHT.
AND THEN YOU LOST YOUR PANTS.
WRONG. FIRST WE WENT FOR CHINESE.
THEN I LOST MY PANTS...

KUMUSTA KA


SPEAK LOUD!
PAY IN ADVANCE!
NO FOOD STAMPS
NO CREDIT!
PUT MONEY IN SLOT!
WHAT --?!
ARE YOU DEAF, TOAD --?!
86 ORDERS OF MOO GOO GAI PAN, 15 ORDERS OF STEAMED BROCCOLI AND --
-- WHAT THE DEVIL DID YOU CALL THAT --?
RICE.
LOOK -- LET ME HANDLE THIS --
<HEY -- JUST WORK WITH ME HERE, FRIEND.>
<THESE GUYS ARE FROM OUT OF TOWN. WAY OUT, IF YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN...>
WHAT THE @#$% IS THIS GUY SAYING?
KUMUSTA KA
<HE WAS SPEAKING CANTONESE. HE THINKS YOU'RE FROM CHINA.>
<HE WAS MAKING A JOKE AT OUR EXPENSE.>
*Translated from Tagalog — J. & J.
<WELL, HERE'S A GAG ON HIM -- WE DON'T TAKE CREDIT CARDS.>
<WE HAVE PREPARED FOR THIS POSSIBILITY...>
?!


AND WHAT HAVE WE *HERE* YO?
SUP, BABY. I'M *MANUEL RAMOS*. I'M SURE YOU *HEARD* OF ME.
NOW, WHAT'S A FINE PIECE LIKE *YOU* DOIN IN *MY WORLD* WIT' ALLAT *LOOT* --
EVERETT K. ROSS -- OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF PROTOCOL, U.S. STATE DEPARTMENT.
Y'ALL BE *COOL*. JUST *CHILL*.
DON'T START NONE, WON'T *BE* NONE
CHOMMP
YO, HOLMES, MAN -- I'MA *SHOW* O'BOY SOMETHIN' --
NOT THE HAIR!! NOT THE HAIR!
BLAAAMM

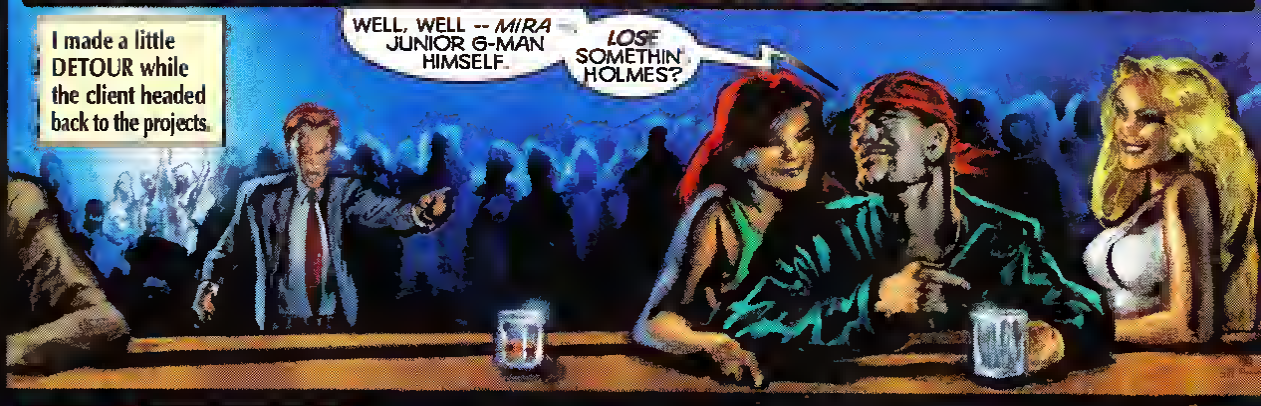

LOOK AT YOU SISSIES.
<FRANCIS -- I TOLDYA BEFORE -- STOP PICKIN' ON THE WHITE PEOPLE.>
<MAKE ME SAY IT AGAIN, AND YOUR MOTHER GOES BACK IN THE CAGE.>
<AND THIS TIME, SHE'S GOTTA WEAR THE BAG AGAIN.>*
*from Spanish -- J&J
<EY... YO -- TORK, MAN -- IT'S COOL>
<WE WAS JUST LEAVING, AIIGHT --?>
"AIIGHT?" "AIIGHT?!"
WHUZZAT, EBONICS?
REGISTER'S CLOSED, DIRTBAG. GO ROB SOMEBODY ELSE.
THANKS FOR THE SAVE, DETECTIVE -- Ah --
SERGEANT TORK. JUST TORK.
YES, WELL, I'M --
-- SLUMMIN' FOR SOME SKAG, DOG BREATH? YOU LONG ISLAND COLLEGE CREWS SWINGING THROUGH THE HOOD --
-- DOWN WIT' THE BROTHERS. RIGHT ONNNNN, DUDE.
WAIT -- JUST WAIT -- I'M OCP --
YEAH... YOU KNOW MEEE..!
...WAIT... MY I.D. --
WELL NOW...
... I CAN'T WAIT TO HEAR THIS STORY...
-- MY I.D. --!!



THE FINEST HOUR



Once Sgt. Tork ran the DIPLOMATIC PLATES on the client's limo, confirming our story, he told me where Ramos usually hung out.





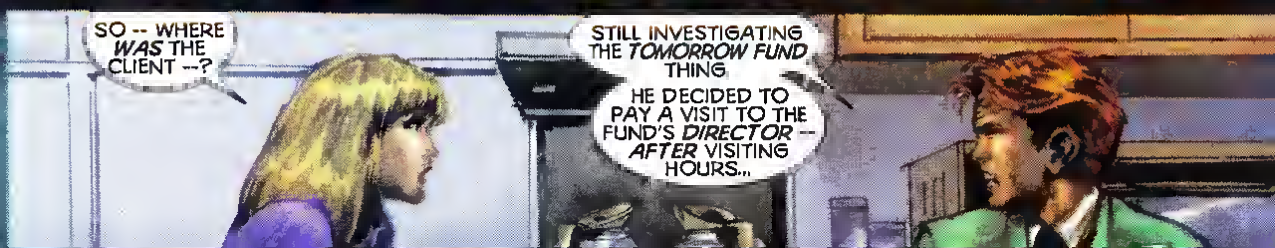

Oh, THAT'S FUNNY.
YOU'RE A RIOT.
OKAY, GIRLS -- ENOUGH -- LET'S HAVE IT.
IF YOU SAY SO, ESE --!
HEEEYYY --!
Odd as it now seems, I really didn't see that coming.
KERRACK
And the rest of the evening is pretty much a BLUR...
WHAT TREACHERY ABOUNDS --?!?
...beginning with ZURI'S arrival...
Guess I hadn't given them the SLIP after all.
FEAR NOT, FRIEND ROSS --
NO HARM SHALL BEFALL HE WHOM MY LIEGE HAS ANOINTED!


Wow. I'd been anointed. Who knew.
FOR WAKANDA!
FOR EVERETT K. ROSS!
FOR NEW LOTS!
The client and his bookends tried to break it up, but by THAT time --
-- I was kind of INTO it.
I had flashbacks of Natalie McPhail shoving me off the monkey bars in third grade. My EGO beat the snot out of my COMMON SENSE.
I lost my pants.
Just like with Natalie...
KIDS -- KIDS --
-- LET'S PLAY A ROUND OF 'GUESS WHO'S GOIN' TO THE POKEY.'
LET'S JUST SAY IT WASN'T MY FINEST HOUR.
WHICH EXPLAINS...


6975H23
MILAJE, OORA
75th Precinct
1000 Sutter Ave
Brooklyn, New York
11208-3553
16 Sept. 1998
6975H24
ZURI, NONE GIVEN
75th Precinct
1000 Sutter Ave
Brooklyn, New York
11208-3553
16 Sept. 1998
6975H25
PANTHER, THE BLACK
75th Precinct
1000 Sutter Ave
Brooklyn, New York
11208-3553
16 Sept. 1998
6975H26
ROSS, EVERETT K.
75th Precinct
1000 Sutter Ave
Brooklyn, New York
11208-3553
16 Sept. 1998


I D.I.'ED THE A.D.A., GOT US SPRUNG, WHICH LED BACK TO THE HOUSING PROJECT ZURI'S HISTORY LESSON --
AND THE *DEVIL'S PANTS*
THERE YOU GO
*D.I. = Diplomatic Immunity, A.D.A. = Assistant District Attorney -- J & J.


YOU EVER BEEN ON JERRY SPRINGER --?


SO -- WHERE *WAS* THE CLIENT --?
STILL INVESTIGATING THE *TOMORROW FUND* THING.
HE DECIDED TO PAY A VISIT TO THE FUND'S *DIRECTOR* -- *AFTER* VISITING HOURS...

THE NAME



Marion Vicar had been the Executive Director of The Tomorrow Fund. After the scandal broke, she was nailed on fraud, embezzlement and money laundering. None of which concerned the client.

See, there was this child. One day he was holding her in his arms.

One day she was dead in an alley.

And the client was a man of remarkable focus.

I WANT A *NAME*, VICAR.

-- ?! WHO --?

AAAHH!

A *NAME*. THE MAN WHO *CORRUPTED* YOU. WHO CONVINCED A DECENT AND HONORABLE WOMAN TO SUBVERT A CHILDREN'S CHARITY --

-- INTO A MONEY-LAUNDERING OPERATION FOR DRUG CARTELS. WHO CAST A *SPELL* ON YOU, VICAR?

MISTER -- Y-YOU C-CAN GO TO *HELL* --!


<ENTER, BELOVED.>
<YES, MY LORD.>
KAP
THE NAME, VICAR. THE DEVIL WHO ENGINEERED THIS GAME---
-- CORRUPTED YOU -- CREATED THE SCANDAL -- KILLED A CHILD --
-- ALL DONE TO DRAW ME AWAY FROM MY HOMELAND.
SPEAK HIS NAME.
SAY IT.
acckk -- aahhkk --
-- ACHEBE.
ALL RIGHT...
...WHO'S "ACHEBE" --?
WELL -- THAT'S WHERE THE FUN STARTS...
KLUNNK
NEXT:
ACHEBE
THE FUN STARTS

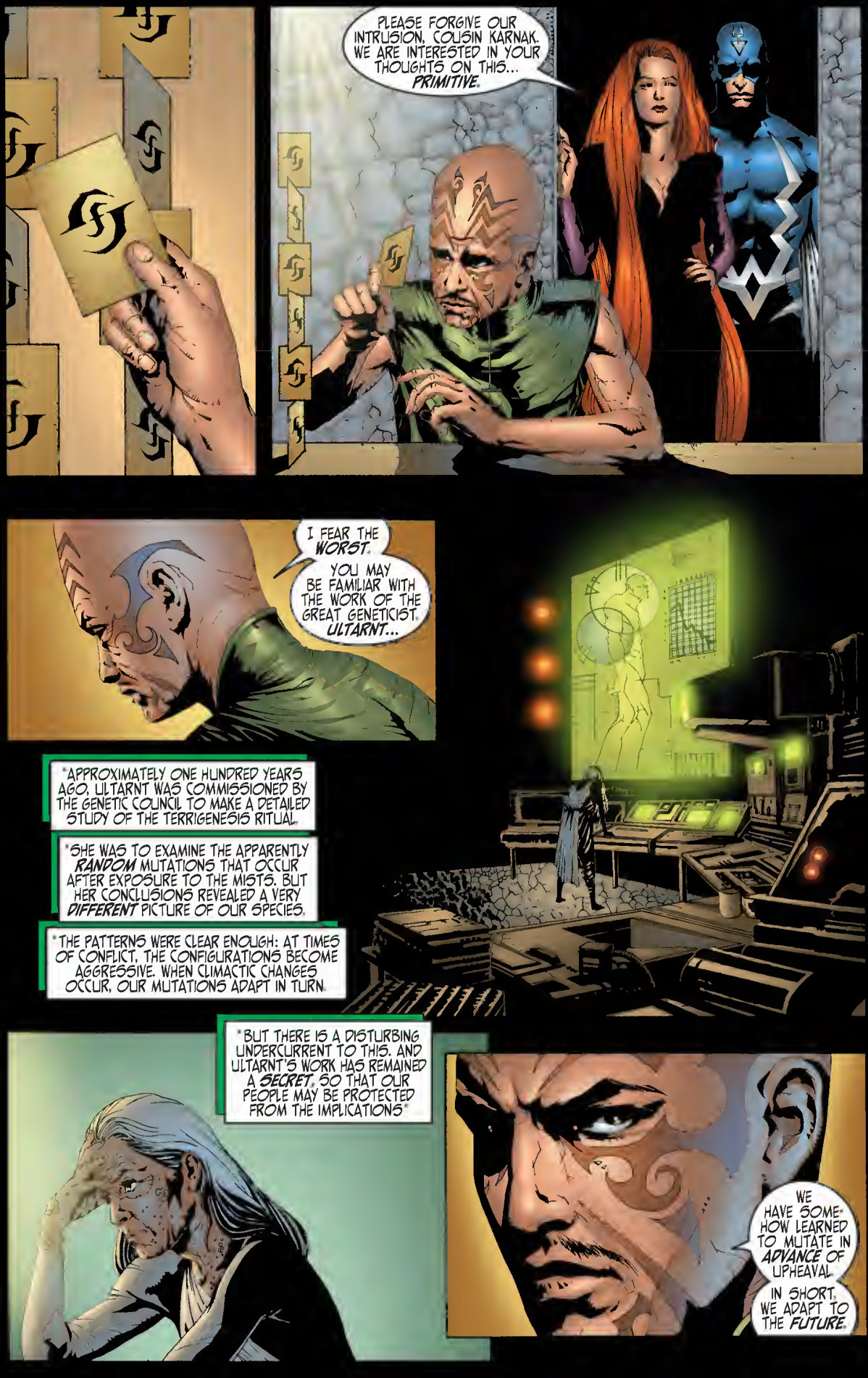

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WHO SPEAKS FOR YOU?
ALL, AND NONE. WE ARE AS ONE.
THEN MARK ME WELL: A DECISION HAS BEEN MADE TO ADD TO YOUR NUMBER, AS REPLACEMENT FOR THOSE WHO ARE FAILING.
YOUR KING HAS DECREED THAT THIS ONE SHALL BE INTEGRATED INTO THE SUBSTRUCTURE. YOU WILL FIND IT WORK IN THE LOWER LEVEL POWER PLANT.
AS COMPENSATION, PLANNED REDISTRICTING BY OUR SPECIES WILL NOT GO AHEAD. YOU WILL BE ALLOWED TO REMAIN IN ATTILAN.
THIS IS *WRONG*. WE WERE TO BE GIVEN NEW SPACE.
THERE WAS AN *AGREEMENT*—
YOUR AGREEMENT WITH BLACK BOLT HAS BEEN *AMENDED*.

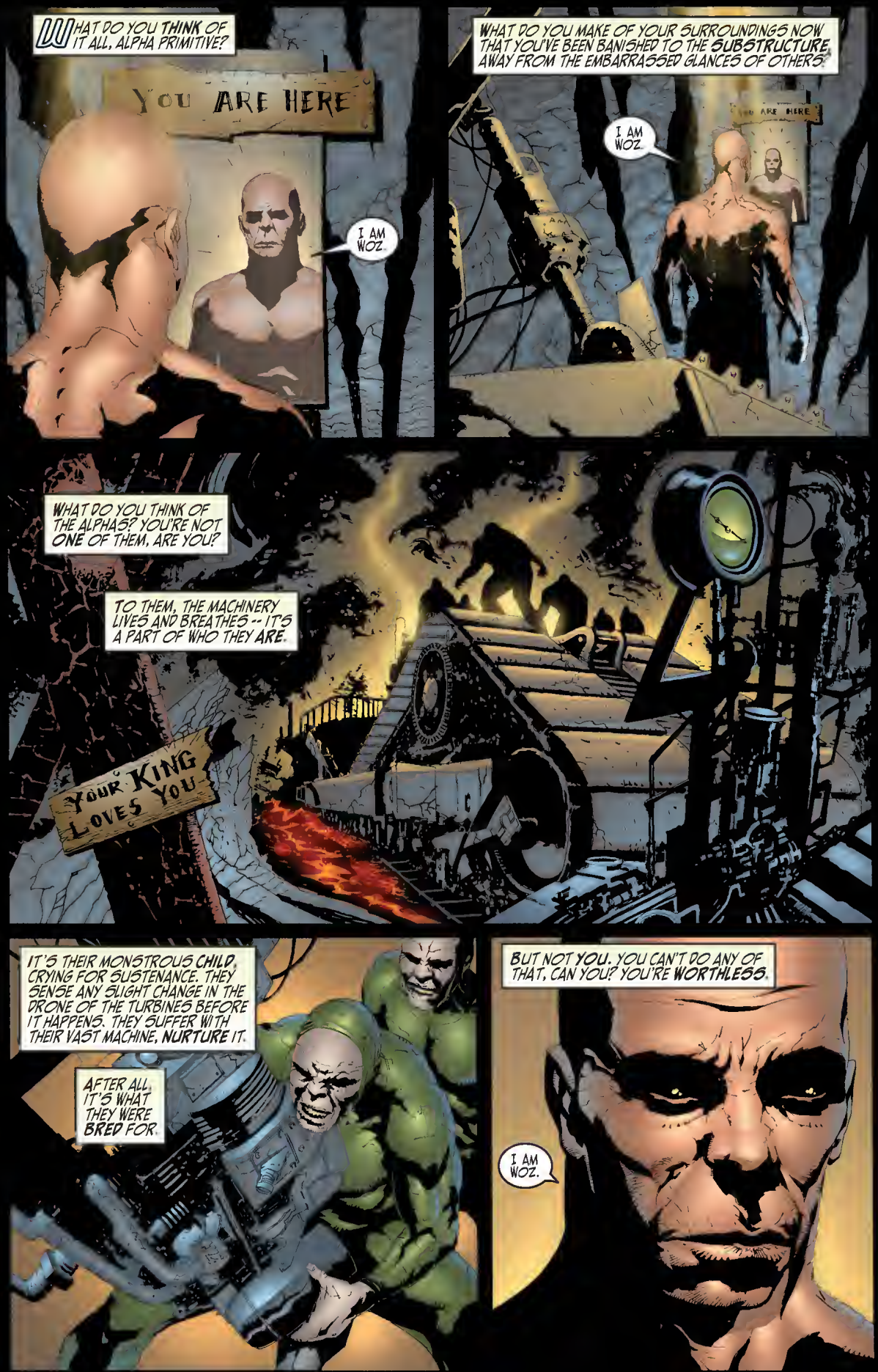

I AM WOZ.
NO. YOU ARE INHUMAN NO LONGER. YOU ARE ALPHA.
GO WITH THEM...DON'T BE AFRAID. IT IS THE WILL OF YOUR KING.
THEY ARE YOUR FAMILY NOW.
STAN LEE PRESENTS:
GHOST IN THE MACHINE
PAUL JENKINS Writes
JAE LEE Draws
DAVID KEMP RS&Colors
COMICRAFT/WA Letters
JIMMY & JOE Give the Orders
NANCI DAKESIAN Makes it Happen
BOB HARRAS Gets the Credit


PLEASE FORGIVE OUR INTRUSION, COUSIN KARNAK. WE ARE INTERESTED IN YOUR THOUGHTS ON THIS... PRIMITIVE.
I FEAR THE WORST.
YOU MAY BE FAMILIAR WITH THE WORK OF THE GREAT GENETICIST, ULTARNT...
"APPROXIMATELY ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO, ULTARNT WAS COMMISSIONED BY THE GENETIC COUNCIL TO MAKE A DETAILED STUDY OF THE TERRIGENESIS RITUAL.
"SHE WAS TO EXAMINE THE APPARENTLY RANDOM MUTATIONS THAT OCCUR AFTER EXPOSURE TO THE MISTS. BUT HER CONCLUSIONS REVEALED A VERY DIFFERENT PICTURE OF OUR SPECIES.
"THE PATTERNS WERE CLEAR ENOUGH: AT TIMES OF CONFLICT, THE CONFIGURATIONS BECOME AGGRESSIVE. WHEN CLIMACTIC CHANGES OCCUR, OUR MUTATIONS ADAPT IN TURN.
"BUT THERE IS A DISTURBING UNDERCURRENT TO THIS. AND ULTARNT'S WORK HAS REMAINED A SECRET, SO THAT OUR PEOPLE MAY BE PROTECTED FROM THE IMPLICATIONS"
WE HAVE SOMEHOW LEARNED TO MUTATE IN ADVANCE OF UPHEAVAL.
IN SHORT, WE ADAPT TO THE FUTURE.

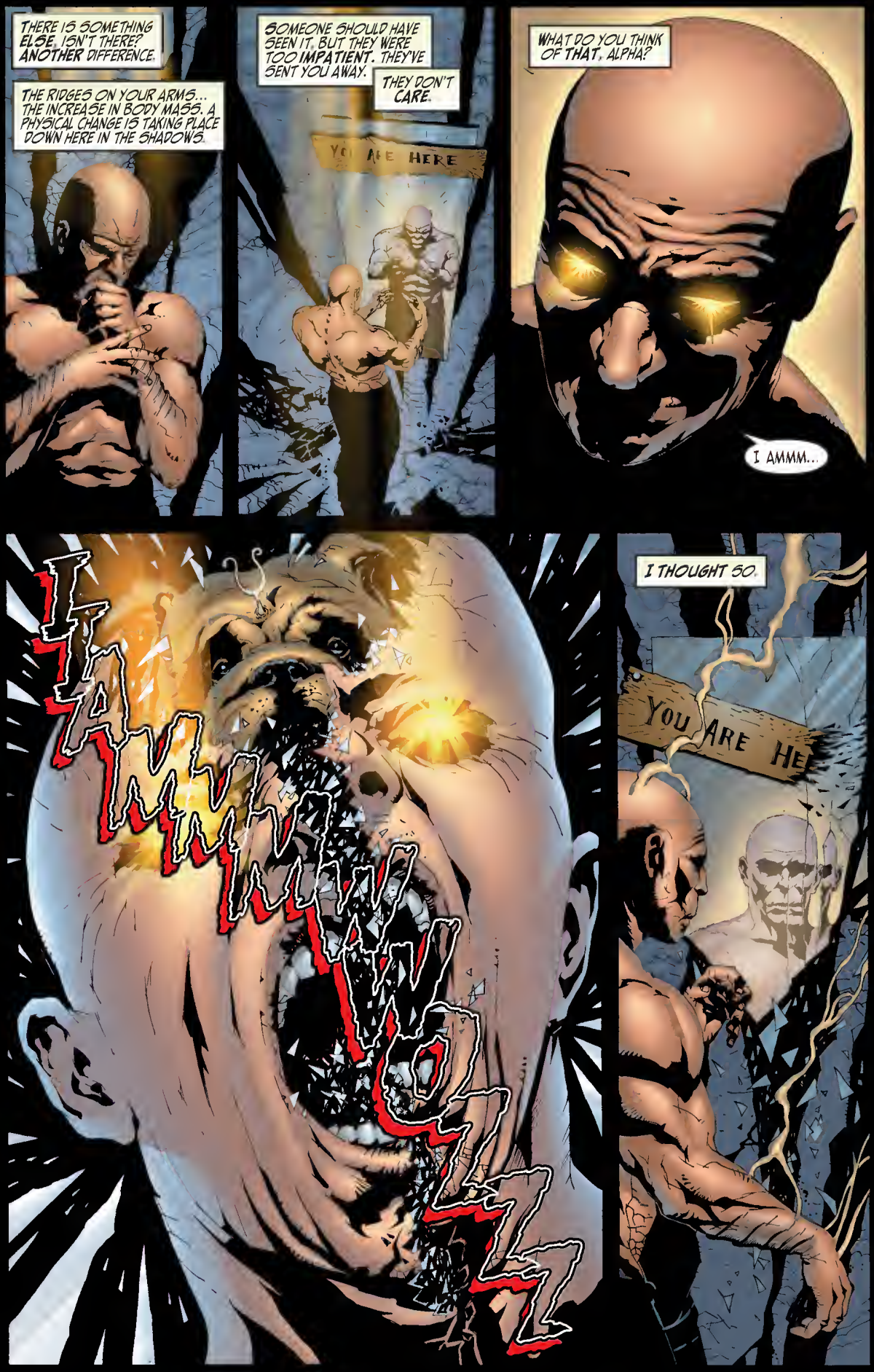

FURTHER STUDIES SHOWED THAT IF AN INHUMAN OF A TYPE INTEGRAL TO OUR SOCIAL STRUCTURE DIES BEFORE ITS TIME, IT WILL BE REPLACED WITHIN THREE YEARS.
RATHER THAN FOLLOWING THE GENETIC PATTERN SUGGESTED BY HEREDITY, WE ADAPT INTO GENOTYPES THAT FIT THE REQUIREMENTS OF SOCIETY AS A WHOLE -- LIKE PIECES OF A PUZZLE.
THE PROBLEM ARISES WHEN A PIECE OF THE SOCIETAL PUZZLE IS REMOVED, AND REPLACED WITH AN ESSENTIALLY INCOMPATIBLE CONFIGURATION, SUCH AS THIS ALPHA PRIMITIVE.
WHAT DO YOU SUPPOSE HAPPENS THEN, KARNAK?


I'VE NEVER BEEN SO DISAPPOINTED IN EVOLUTION.
Oh, YOU MAY THINK YOU'RE SPECIAL JUST 'CAUSE A FEW PEOPLE HAVE BEEN TALKING ABOUT YOU. YOU MAY THINK YOU CAN MAKE IT IN THE ROYAL GUARD JUST BY FLAPPING YOUR WINGS A LITTLE BIT.
OR BY BLOWING A FEW LIGHTNING BOLTS OUT OF YOUR EYEBALLS. Hmm? I'D LIKE TO SEE THAT.
YOU MIGHT EVEN GET SO SICK OF ME THAT YOU'LL WANT TO TAKE THAT MASK OFF AND SHOW ME WHAT HAVOC MOTHER NATURE HAS WREAKED ON YOUR PRETTY LITTLE FACE.
YOU MIGHT.
IF I LET YOU LIVE THAT LONG.


UNFORTUNATELY, THERE ARE REGULATIONS. I'M NOT ALLOWED TO KILL NEW RECRUITS UNTIL AFTER THEIR FIRST WEEK, IF THE TRAINING DOESN'T GET THEM FIRST. YOU HAVE ONE HOUR TO ACCLIMATIZE TO YOUR LIVING QUARTERS. I WILL RETURN FOR YOU SHORTLY...
...AND WHEN I DO, I'LL WANT TO SEE MY FACE IN THAT FLOOR.
Tch...WHAT A TYRANT. DO THEY HAVE ANY MORE LIKE HIM, D'YOU THINK?
TONAJA...?
TONJ, YOU OKAY?
YEAH...
I WAS JUST THINKING ABOUT WOZ.

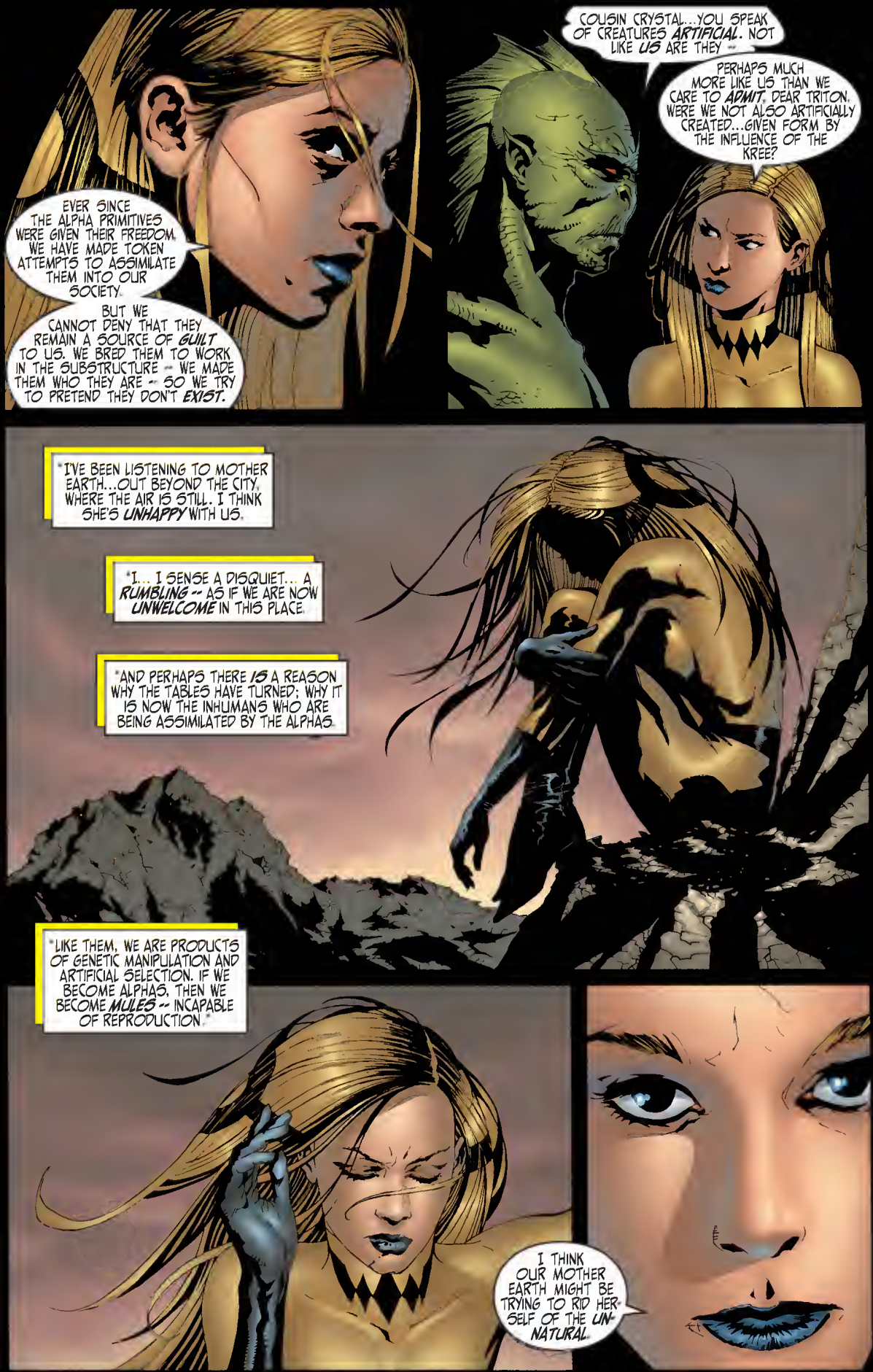

WHAT DO YOU THINK OF IT ALL, ALPHA PRIMITIVE?
YOU ARE HERE
I AM WOZ.
WHAT DO YOU MAKE OF YOUR SURROUNDINGS NOW THAT YOU'VE BEEN BANISHED TO THE SUBSTRUCTURE AWAY FROM THE EMBARRASSED GLANCES OF OTHERS?
I AM WOZ.
WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE ALPHAS? YOU'RE NOT ONE OF THEM, ARE YOU?
TO THEM, THE MACHINERY LIVES AND BREATHES -- IT'S A PART OF WHO THEY ARE.
YOUR KING LOVES YOU
IT'S THEIR MONSTROUS CHILD, CRYING FOR SUSTENANCE. THEY SENSE ANY SLIGHT CHANGE IN THE DRONE OF THE TURBINES BEFORE IT HAPPENS. THEY SUFFER WITH THEIR VAST MACHINE, NURTURE IT.
AFTER ALL, IT'S WHAT THEY WERE BRED FOR.
BUT NOT YOU. YOU CAN'T DO ANY OF THAT, CAN YOU? YOU'RE WORTHLESS.
I AM WOZ.


TO YOU, THE DIFFERENCES ARE CRYSTAL CLEAR. THESE ARE MANUFACTURED CREATURES, BORN OF A LONG-DEAD SCIENTIST'S WHIM.
MOTHERLESS, FATHERLESS, GENDERLESS; THEY ARE IDENTICAL IN THEIR ISOLATION FROM SOCIETY.
THEY WERE GROWN EN MASSE; ALTERED HERE AND THERE, MADE RECEPTIVE TO SUGGESTION, AND RELEASED INTO THE SUBSTRUCTURE.
TO WORK THE MACHINE... ALWAYS AT THE CALL OF THE GREAT ENGINES.
OH, THERE HAVE BEEN PROBLEMS. SUCH AS WHEN THE POOR FOOLS WERE LED INTO AN UPRISING AGAINST THEIR "BENEFACTORS" -- THE CITIZENS OF ATTILAN.
GIVE A MORON JUST AN INKLING OF A NOTION THAT IT CAN BE FREE, AND IT'LL JUMP LIKE A DOG TO GRASP THE CONCEPT BY THE THROAT.
THEY'VE BEEN FREED, TO BE SURE, BUT WHAT IS FREEDOM TO THESE CREATURES? THEIR BREEDING GIVES THEM NO CHOICE BUT TO WORK THE MACHINE.
HERE THEY REMAIN, AND HERE THEY WILL DIE WHEN THERE ARE NO OTHERS TO REPLACE THEM.
DOWN IN THE SUBSTRUCTURE. OUT OF SIGHT. LIKE DIRT SWEPT UNDER THE RUG.
LIKE YOU.


THERE IS SOMETHING ELSE. ISN'T THERE? ANOTHER DIFFERENCE.
THE RIDGES ON YOUR ARMS... THE INCREASE IN BODY MASS. A PHYSICAL CHANGE IS TAKING PLACE DOWN HERE IN THE SHADOWS.
SOMEONE SHOULD HAVE SEEN IT. BUT THEY WERE TOO IMPATIENT. THEY'VE SENT YOU AWAY.
THEY DON'T CARE.
YOU ARE HERE
WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THAT, ALPHA?
I AMMM...
I AM WOLF
I THOUGHT SO.
YOU ARE HE


NRRR... ROWF! NNNRRR...!
WHAT'S WRONG, DIN?
I CAN'T GET THE STUPID THING TO EAT.
HE'S BEEN LIKE THIS FOR AN HOUR. JUST STARING AT THE WALL AND GOING CRAZY. WHATEVER HE THINKS HE SEES, IT'S GOT HIM SPOOKED.
WELL, I WOULDN'T LET GORGON FIND OUT IF I WERE YOU. HE LOVES THAT DOG, YOU KNOW --
TSS...
HE IS SO PRETTY WHEN HE GETS IN TROUBLE.
TELL ME ABOUT IT.


WE HAVE ALL HEARD COUSIN KARNAK'S THEORIES ON THE MATTER OF THE ALPHA. NOW, MY HUSBAND OPENS THE FLOOR TO ANY OTHER INSIGHTS.
I HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY.
THEN THE FLOOR IS *YOURS*, SISTER.
I, UH... I DON'T THINK YOU'RE GOING TO *LIKE* IT.


EVER SINCE THE ALPHA PRIMITIVES WERE GIVEN THEIR FREEDOM, WE HAVE MADE TOKEN ATTEMPTS TO ASSIMILATE THEM INTO OUR SOCIETY.
BUT WE CANNOT DENY THAT THEY REMAIN A SOURCE OF GUILT TO US. WE BRED THEM TO WORK IN THE SUBSTRUCTURE -- WE MADE THEM WHO THEY ARE -- SO WE TRY TO PRETEND THEY DON'T EXIST.
COUSIN CRYSTAL...YOU SPEAK OF CREATURES ARTIFICIAL. NOT LIKE US ARE THEY --
PERHAPS MUCH MORE LIKE US THAN WE CARE TO ADMIT, DEAR TRITON. WERE WE NOT ALSO ARTIFICIALLY CREATED...GIVEN FORM BY THE INFLUENCE OF THE KREE?
"I'VE BEEN LISTENING TO MOTHER EARTH...OUT BEYOND THE CITY, WHERE THE AIR IS STILL. I THINK SHE'S UNHAPPY WITH US.
"I... I SENSE A DISQUIET... A RUMBLING -- AS IF WE ARE NOW UNWELCOME IN THIS PLACE.
"AND PERHAPS THERE IS A REASON WHY THE TABLES HAVE TURNED; WHY IT IS NOW THE INHUMANS WHO ARE BEING ASSIMILATED BY THE ALPHAS.
"LIKE THEM, WE ARE PRODUCTS OF GENETIC MANIPULATION AND ARTIFICIAL SELECTION. IF WE BECOME ALPHAS, THEN WE BECOME MULES -- INCAPABLE OF REPRODUCTION."
I THINK OUR MOTHER EARTH MIGHT BE TRYING TO RID HERSELF OF THE UNNATURAL.


WE MUST FIGHT AGAIN TO BE FREE.

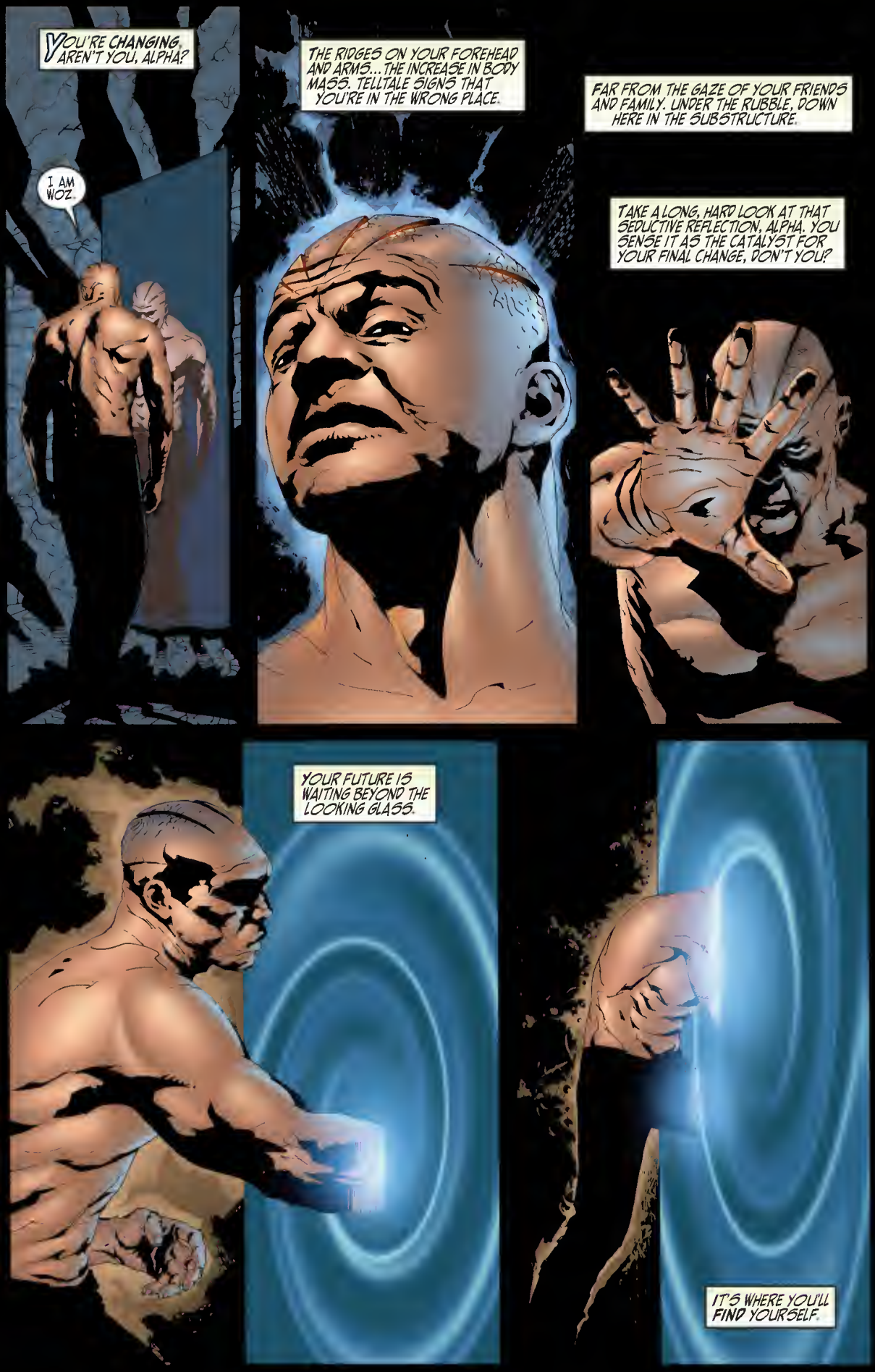

ONE HAS BEEN BROUGHT INTO US, BUT IS NOT US. IF WE DO NOT ACCEPT IT, MAKE IT WORK THE MACHINE, WE WILL BE PUNISHED.
DO WE ACCEPT THIS? NO.
WE MUST TALK TO THOSE ABOVE -- LISTEN TO WHY THEY HAVE DONE THIS. TO FIGHT IS WRONG.
WE MUST FIGHT. BLACK BOLT SAID WE WOULD BE FREE. BUT IT IS THE SAME AS BEFORE. THEY LIVE ABOVE, AND WE WORK BELOW.
TO WORK IS GOOD. IT IS WHAT WE WERE CREATED FOR.
THAT IS WHY WE ARE NOT FREE.

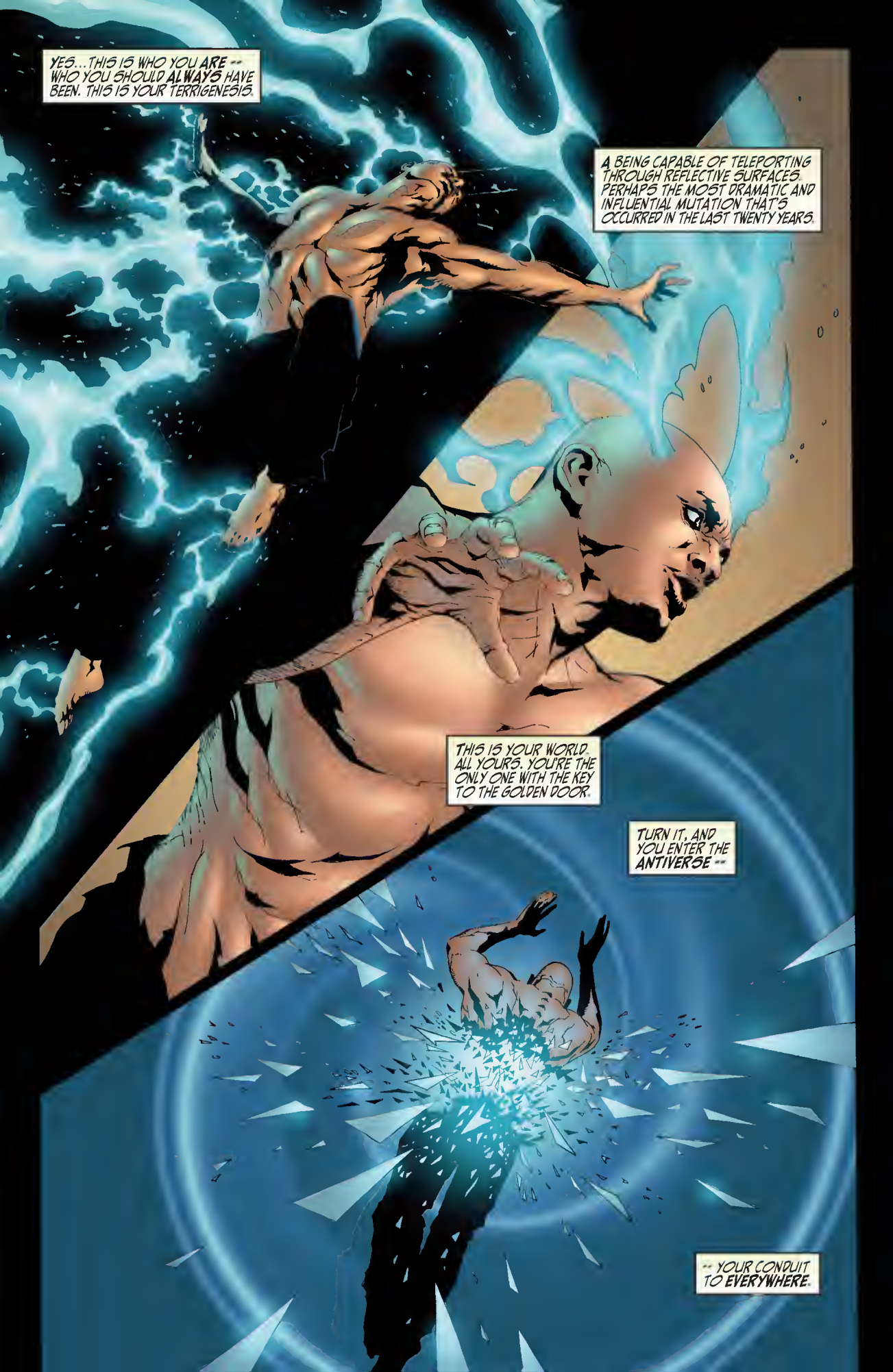

You hear their crude debate, but the words scarcely register.
You don't care, because you're lost in the MACHINE.
There's another WORLD through there -- you can FEEL it.
It whispers to you from beneath the shiny surface of the motor housing.
Maybe it's where you belong -- in your own world. Far away from everyone else.
All you have to do is reach out and TAKE it.


IT RUSHES OVER YOU LIKE A MILLION VOICES IN UNISON, SPEAKING IN A LANGUAGE THAT ONLY YOU CAN UNDERSTAND. IT MAKES YOUR SOUL CRY.
IT'S A FAINT IMAGE OF THE OTHER SIDE OF THE MIRROR -- THE WORLD YOU'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR.
IT'S THE BIG SECRET, ALPHA...
...AND YOU'RE ALMOST READY TO FIND OUT WHAT IT IS.


TELL US, TRUSTED CARTHUS, HOW DOES THE BOY DEWOZ FARE?
OH, HE'S DOING VERY WELL, MAJESTIES. IN FACT, HE HAS ADAPTED MOST GRACIOUSLY TO THIS... UNEXPECTED TURN OF EVENTS.
DESPITE MY RESERVATIONS, THE BOY HAS NOBLY REQUESTED ASSIGNMENT TO THE SUBSTRUCTURE, TO WORK WITH THE ALPHAS THERE --
SO SUDDENLY, CARTHUS?
THE POOR CHILD IS EMBARRASSED FOR HIS FAMILY. I HAVE TRIED TO REASSURE HIM THAT ALL IS WELL.
I FEEL THIS ASSIGNMENT WILL HELP HIM TO APPRECIATE HIS WORTH TO SOCIETY, AND TO HELP HIM FIND A ROLE IN IT. "FROM DIVERSITY COMES EQUALITY," AS I HAVE OFTEN REMINDED HIM.
HE WILL MAKE A FINE AMBASSADOR.
I'M SURE HE WILL.


THIS SATISFIES US, CARTHUS. YOU HAVE DONE WELL. WE TRUST THAT YOU WILL KEEP US INFORMED AS TO THE BOY'S PROGRESS.
PLEASE ALLOW OUR GUARDS TO ESCORT YOU OUT.
UH, LORD CARTHUS, I HOPE YOU'LL FORGIVE THIS IMPOSITION, BUT WE WERE WONDERING...
YOU SEE WOZ IS A FRIEND OF OURS.
HE IS FARING WELL. YOU HAVE REASON TO BE VERY PROUD OF HIM.
OH, WE ARE -- ESPECIALLY WITH WHAT HE'S DOING FOR THE ALPHAS. WILL YOU SAY "HELLO" TO HIM FOR US?
I WILL... WHEN I SEE HIM.


You're changing, aren't you, Alpha?
I am Woz.
The ridges on your forehead and arms... the increase in body mass. Telltale signs that you're in the wrong place.
Far from the gaze of your friends and family. Under the rubble, down here in the substructure.
Take a long, hard look at that seductive reflection, Alpha. You sense it as the catalyst for your final change, don't you?
Your future is waiting beyond the looking glass.
It's where you'll find yourself.


YES...THIS IS WHO YOU ARE -- WHO YOU SHOULD ALWAYS HAVE BEEN. THIS IS YOUR TERRIGENESIS.
A BEING CAPABLE OF TELEPORTING THROUGH REFLECTIVE SURFACES. PERHAPS THE MOST DRAMATIC AND INFLUENTIAL MUTATION THAT'S OCCURRED IN THE LAST TWENTY YEARS.
THIS IS YOUR WORLD. ALL YOURS. YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE WITH THE KEY TO THE GOLDEN DOOR.
TURN IT, AND YOU ENTER THE ANTIVERSE --
-- YOUR CONDUIT TO EVERYWHERE.


YOU BELIEVE ME NOW, DON'T YOU? I HAD FAITH IN YOU, EVEN WHEN OTHERS HAD ABANDONED YOU.
EVEN WHEN OTHERS HAD MADE YOU ALPHA --
I AM WOZ.
YES... YES, YOU ARE.
AND I AM MAXIMUS. YOUR ONLY FRIEND IN THIS GODFORSAKEN PLACE.


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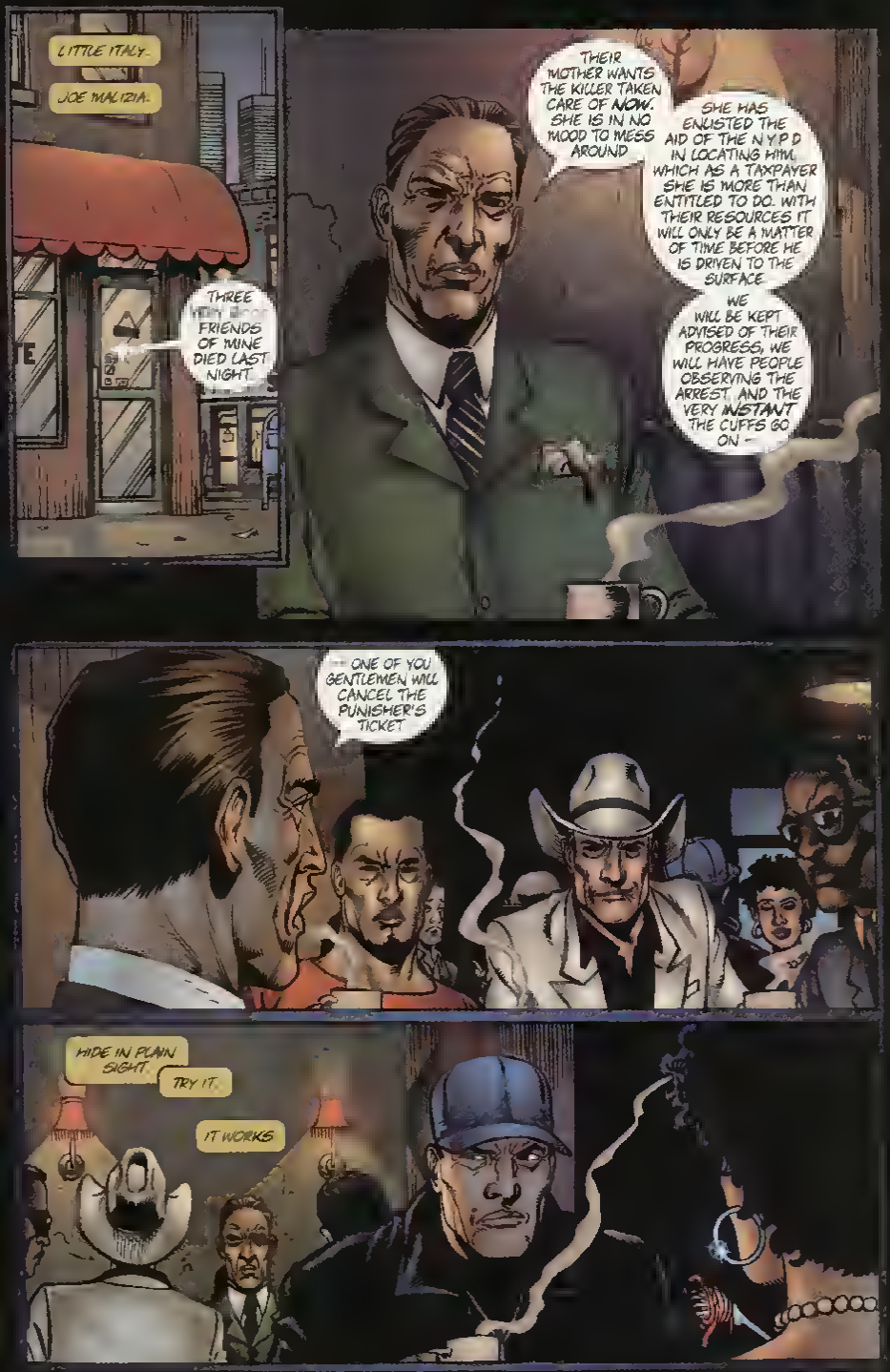


BADABOOM, BADABING

GARTH ENNIS STORY **STEVE DILLON** PENCILS **JIMMY PALMIOTTI** INKS
CHRIS SOTOMAYOR COLORS **RICHARD STARKINGS & COMICRAFT'S WES ABBOTT** LETTERS
JOE QUESADA & JIMMY PALMIOTTI EDITORS **NANCI DAKESIAN** MANAGING EDITOR **BOB HARRAS** CHIEF

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OF COURSE WE APPRECIATE YOUR POSITION, MR. MAYOR. WE HAVE PHOTOGRAPHS OF SEVERAL OF YOUR POSITIONS FROM THAT FACT-FINDING TOUR YOU WENT ON IN VEGAS, REMEMBER?
WE'RE AT THAT CASINO TOO COMMISSIONER, DON'T EVEN TRY TO DENY IT! SO QUIT WHINING AND DO WHAT MA GNUCCI WANTS BECAUSE IF I GET CRUCIFIED FOR THIS I SWEAR YOU'LL BE NAILED UP THERE BESIDE ME! RIGHT ON THE FRONT PAGE!
I DON'T CARE HOW YOUR OFFICERS FEEL ABOUT THE PUNISHER, CAPTAIN! IT'S YOUR PRECINCT SO IT'S YOUR RESPONSIBILITY! I WANT YOUR BEST MAN ON THE JOB AND I WANT RESULTS!
GNUCCIS MUST BE TURNIN' UP THE HEAT.
UH-HUH
MY BEST MAN ON THE JOB? ANYONE I GIVE THIS TO'S GONNA LAUGH IN MY FACE—
WAIT A MINUTE.
GET ME SOAP.


LITTLE ITALY.
JOE MALIZIA.
THREE FRIENDS OF MINE DIED LAST NIGHT.
THEIR MOTHER WANTS THE KILLER TAKEN CARE OF NOW. SHE IS IN NO MOOD TO MESS AROUND
SHE HAS ENLISTED THE AID OF THE N.Y.P.D IN LOCATING HIM. WHICH AS A TAXPAYER SHE IS MORE THAN ENTITLED TO DO. WITH THEIR RESOURCES IT WILL ONLY BE A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE HE IS DRIVEN TO THE SURFACE
WE WILL BE KEPT ADVISED OF THEIR PROGRESS, WE WILL HAVE PEOPLE OBSERVING THE ARREST. AND THE VERY INSTANT THE CUFFS GO ON —
— ONE OF YOU GENTLEMEN WILL CANCEL THE PUNISHER'S TICKET
HIDE IN PLAIN SIGHT.
TRY IT.
IT WORKS


JOE IS CONSIGLIORI TO MA GUCCI WHICH IS HOW HE AFFORDS THE FANCY SUIT.
AND THE TOP TALENT
SO YOU LIKE THE JOB. YOU LIKE THE MONEY. YOU'RE IN.
IN HERE IS A DOWN PAYMENT AND A LOCATION MEET ME TONIGHT AT NINE-THIRTY AND WE'LL HAVE ALL THE WEAPONS YOU NEED.
THE CHECK.
#UURRRPP#
TWO HUNDRED BUCKS AN' ALL I HADDA DO'S EAT LUNCH WIT' YA? WHOOPEE-DOO...
THAT --
-- AND FORGET IT EVER HAPPENED.


DETECTIVE SOAP! IT'S... RICHARD, RIGHT?
IT'S MARTIN, SIR
MARTY!
SO I GUESS THE ALONSO CASE DIDN'T WORK OUT TOO GOOD FOR YOU, HUH, MARTY?
JUDGE KELLY WAS ALL SET TO SIGN THE WARRANT WHEN HE HAD A MASSIVE HEART ATTACK, CAPTAIN. BY THE TIME I GOT A NEW ONE, ALONSO WAS ON A PLANE TO ECUADOR.
IT WAS PURE BAD LUCK, REALLY IT WAS.
UH-HUH. YOU'VE HAD KIND OF A RUN OF BAD LUCK RECENTLY, HAVEN'T YOU, MARTY? I MEAN FOR... WELL FOR MOST OF YOUR CAREER, REALLY?
BUT --
RELAX.
ALL THAT'S ABOUT TO CHANGE.


BUT HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO CATCH THE PUNISHER? I MEAN, EVERY COP IN THE DEPARTMENT LOVES HIM, THEY'RE ALWAYS SAYING HOW HE DOES HALF THE JOB FOR US...
NONSENSE, MARTY HE'S A MURDEROUS VIGILANTE AND IT'S UP TO EACH AND EVERY ONE OF US TO STOP HIM.
SPECIFICALLY IT'S UP TO YOU.
LOOK! WE GOT YOU YOUR OWN OFFICE!
DET. R. SOAP
LIEUTENANT, YOU HAVE TO TALK TO THE CAPTAIN—
HEADING UP AN N.Y.P.D TASK FORCE, MARTY! YOU'RE GONNA MAKE SERGEANT IN NO TIME!
WHAT TASK FORCE?
THEY'RE MEETING YOU AT THE CRIME SCENE
OH, WE MOVED ALL OUR PUNISHER FILES INTO YOUR OFFICE. FIGURED YOU'D WANT TO SEE 'EM.
HAPPY READING!
PUNISHER
HA HA HA HA HA HA


HARRY "HECK" THORNTON
100% ARKANSAS REDNECK, BIG TIME PISTOL FIGHTER
QUICK AS LIGHTNING
OLD STORY ABOUT HECK: OUTDRAWS FOUR STATE TROOPERS, KILLS THREE. LAST ONE GETS OFF A SHOT.
HECK DUCKS IT AND SHOOTS HIM DEAD
DODGED A BULLET
BUT NOT THIRTY.


EDDIE CAU.
LOCAL BOY. MARTIAL ARTIST. BLACK BELT MINIMUM.
IN ANYTHING YOU CARE TO NAME.
I KNOW A LITTLE, TOO.
USE IT IF I HAVE TO.
IF YOU'RE TOO CLOSE TO SHOOT, I RECKON YOU'RE TOO CLOSE PERIOD.
BUT I DO HAVE ONE FAVORITE.
SPLAT-FU.


TALL JOE SMALL
SNIPER EX-MARINE RECON CAPPED FIFTY GUYS IN DESERT STORM
TROUBLE WITH THAT WAR WAS --
-- IT WASN'T VIETNAM.
WHEN YOU'RE ON YOUR OWN -- BEHIND ENEMY LINES -- NO ARTILLERY, NO AIRSTRIKES, NO HOPE OF AN EVAC --
YOU DON'T FIGHT DIRTY
YOU DO THINGS THAT MAKE DIRTY LOOK GOOD


WHAT KIND OF CRIME SCENE IS THIS SUPPOSED TO BE?
THIS IS FIFTH AVENUE, SOAP. WE CAN'T CLOSE DOWN HALF THE CITY 'CAUSE SOME DIRTBAG TOOK A NOSE-DIVE OFF THE EMPIRE STATE BUILDING
NO... BUT...
BUT WHAT?
LOOK, YOU WANT CLUES, GO TALK TO THE CLEAN-UP GUYS. THE STIFF'S AT THE MORGUE.
DETECTIVE SOAP?
BUDDY PLUGG. MOST PEOPLE CALL ME BUD.
I'M THE REST OF THE TASK FORCE


...SO YOU KNOW WHY THEY GAVE US THIS CASE, BUD?
BECAUSE WE HAVEN'T A HOPE OF SOLVING IT.
I MEAN, I'M THE DEPARTMENT'S BIGGEST LOSER, AND YOU -- LET ME GUESS, THIS IS PRETTY MUCH YOUR FIRST ASSIGNMENT, RIGHT?
RIGHT.
THERE'S NOT A COP IN NEW YORK CITY WANTS THE PUNISHER CAUGHT. PUTTING US ON THE JOB IS JUST THE CAPTAIN'S WAY OF SAYING YOU GOT IT, BOSS AND DROP DEAD TO THE COMMISSIONER SIMULTANEOUSLY
AH, WHAT THE HECK. AT LEAST IT CAN'T GET ANY WORSE
YOU WANT TO GET A CUP OF COFFEE, DETECTIVE?
OH, SORRY, I SHOULD HAVE EXPLAINED EARLIER. I'M NOT ACTUALLY A POLICE OFFICER
I'M A BEHAVIORAL PSYCHOLOGIST


I MADE TOO MANY COOKIES.
I MEAN... UM... THEY'LL ONLY GO TO WASTE, AND.. AND..
..IF Y-Y-YOU D-DON'T WANT THEM, IT'S -- IT'S OKAY --!
COOKIES.
HMMM.
I TAKE THEM, SHE MIGHT COME BACK LONELY TYPE WANTS TO TALK
I DON'T TAKE THEM, SHE MIGHT HAVE A NERVOUS BREAKDOWN ON THE SPOT
CAUSE A SCENE, DRAW ATTENTION.
THANK YOU, JOAN.
Y-Y-YOU'RE WELCOME


ACTUALLY --
-- THEY'RE PRETTY GOOD.
JUST BRING 'EM ON IN... OH, HI, MR. SMITH.
Jimmy's PIZZA
MR. BUMPO.
HEY, MR. SMITH!
DAVE.
SPACKER DAVE!
DOING THE TOWN, HUH?
IT'S TEMPTING.

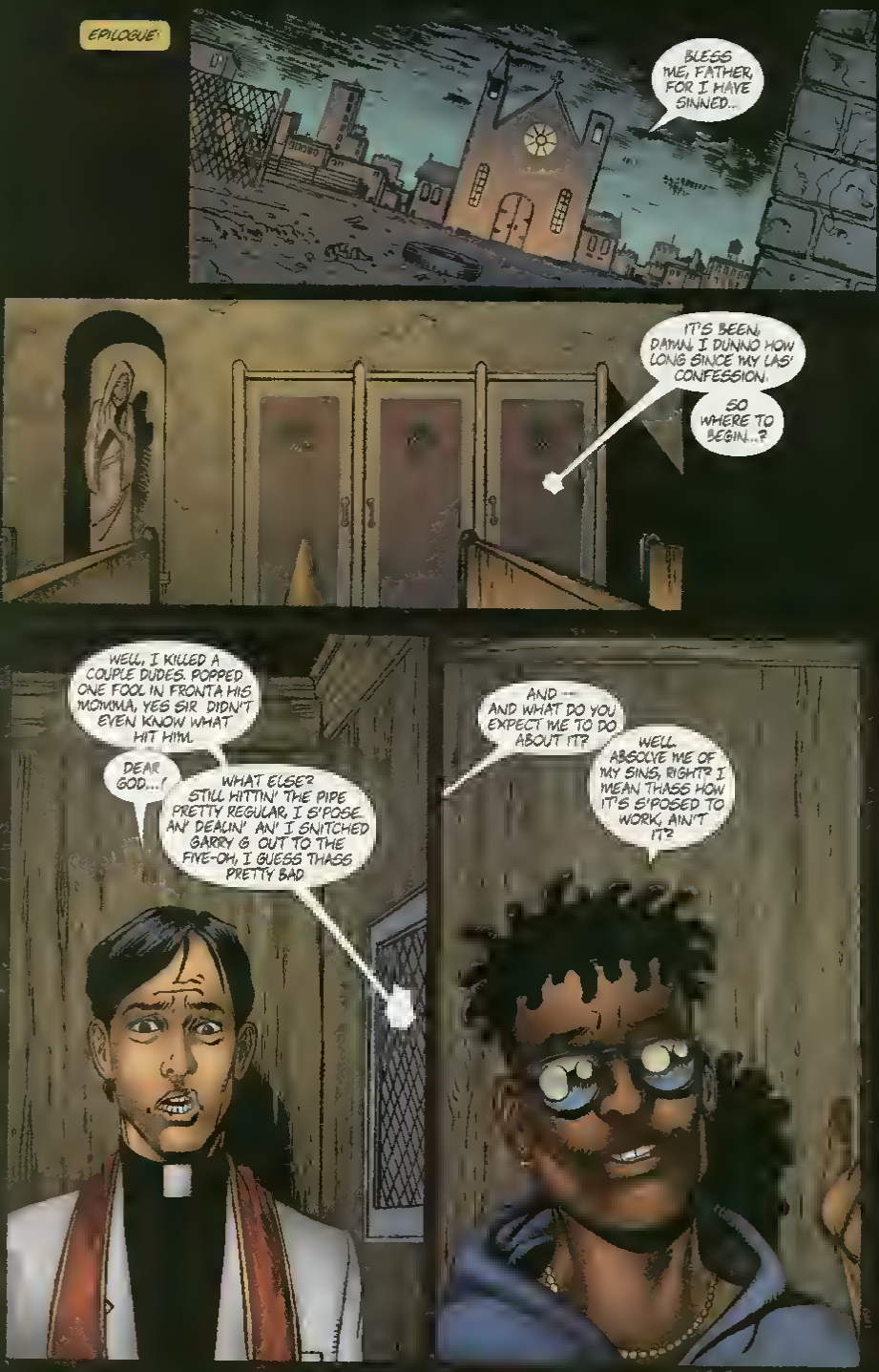

A POLICE SPOKESMAN ASSURED REPORTERS THAT THEIR BEST MEN WERE ON THE JOB. "THE PUNISHER IS A CRIMINAL AND HE'LL BE TREATED LIKE A CRIMINAL," HE SAID IN OTHER WORDS —
TURN THAT GARBAGE OFF, MIKEY.
DAMMIT WHERE ARE THOSE THREE IDIOTS?
IT'S BEEN NEARLY AN HOUR, WE'RE SITTING HERE WITH A TRUNK LOAD OF ORDINANCE, AND THEY STILL AIN'T SHOWN UP—
...YOU KNOW WHAT IT IS? IT'S UNPROFESSIONAL. PLAIN AND SIMPLE, THAT'S ALL THERE IS TO IT.
THESE GUYS ARE SUPPOSED TO BE THE BEST, RIGHT? SO YOU CALL THEM IN, YOU PROMISE TOP DOLLAR -- THEY KNOW YOU'RE GOOD FOR IT -- AND YOU SHAKE HANDS ON IT AND YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO HAVE AN AGREEMENT. AM I RIGHT?
MIKEY?


LOSE THE PIECE MALIZIA.
CALL YOUR BOSS ON THE CARPHONE. PUT HER ON SPEAKER.
WH-WH-WHERE ARE WE GOING?
DO AS YOU'RE TOLD.
WHO THE HELL IS THIS?
IT'S J-J-JOE MALIZIA.
-- IT'S M-M-ME AND THE P-P-PUNISHER!
I'M COMING FOR YOU, MA GNUCCI.


I THOUGHT I'D LET YOU KNOW SO YOU COULD PLAN YOUR FUNERAL IN ADVANCE
I GOT YOUR SONS. I GOT YOUR KILLERS. NOW I'VE GOT YOUR MAN-BEHIND-THE-MAN.
OR MAN-BEHIND-THE-WAG IN YOUR CASE, MA
70 80
NOTHING STOPS ME. NOTHING.
NOW LISTEN TO THIS.
GET OUT.
WHAT?!
YOU GOTTA BE OUT OF YOUR MIND, MAN! WE'RE ON THE LONG ISLAND EXPRESSWAY! WE'RE DOIN' OVER A HUNDRED!
FOR CRYIN' OUT LOUD, YOU GOTTA GIMME A CHANCE!


THE SAME CHANCE YOU'D GIVE ME, MALIZIA.
OUT.
OH -- OH NO! OH LORD!
OOOMM --
AAAAAAIIIIEEEE!
YOU GET ALL THAT MA?
I'LL SEE YOU SOON
KLIK


UH... UH DUND BUHLUV UD...
UHMM... UHLUV?
UH MUD UD! UH MUD UD!
UHMM UHLUV?!
HONNK
URRRRRRRRMMMM
MA GAMUCCI'S SCREAMING BLUE MURDER BY NOW.
THE GUNS WILL GO IN THE ARMORY. THE LIMO IN THE HUDSON.
ALMOST THE END OF A RICH, FULL DAY.


EPILOGUE:
BLESS ME, FATHER, FOR I HAVE SINNED..
IT'S BEEN, DAMN, I DUNNO HOW LONG SINCE MY LAS' CONFESSION.
SO WHERE TO BEGIN...?
WELL, I KILLED A COUPLE DUDES. POPPED ONE FOOL IN FRONTA HIS MOMMA, YES SIR. DIDN'T EVEN KNOW WHAT HIT HIM.
DEAR GOD...!
WHAT ELSE? STILL HITTIN' THE PIPE PRETTY REGULAR, I S'POSE. AN' DEALIN' AN' I SWITCHED BARRY G OUT TO THE FIVE-OH, I GUESS THASS PRETTY BAD
AND -- AND WHAT DO YOU EXPECT ME TO DO ABOUT IT?
WELL, ABSOLVE ME OF MY SINS, RIGHT? I MEAN THASS HOW IT'S S'POSED TO WORK, AIN'T IT?


ABSOLVE YOU?
ABSOLVE YOU?!
YOU THINK YOU CAN ACT LIKE AN ANIMAL AND KILL AND MAIM AND DEAL IN POISON AND THEN COME IN HERE AND BE FORGIVEN JUST LIKE THAT?
OKAY! YOU GOT IT! I'LL ABSOLVE YOU!


I'LL ABSOLVE YOU!
HOLY --
YES! THE HOLY!
I AM THE HOLY!


SHWOKK
CHOKK
SLUNCH
CHOKK
CHOKK
CHOKK
OH GOD FORGIVE ME.
...OH NO.
I'VE DONE IT AGAIN...!
TO BE CONTINUED...


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BLACK PANTHER

With the sleekness of the jungle cat whose name he bears, **T'Challa-the Prince of Wakanda**-stalks both the concrete of the city and the undergrowth of the **Veldt.** So it has been for countless generations of warrior kings, so it is today- and so it shall be for as long as the law of the jungle dictates that only the swift, the smart, and the strong survive.

BLACK PANTHER/ T'CHALLA



A former member of the *Avengers*, he is the ruler of Wakanda, one of the few places in the world where the precious metal, Vibranium, is mined.

EVERETT K. ROSS



State Department attaché assigned to escort *T'Challa* during his stay in the United States.

NIKKI ADAMS



Everett's boss at The State Department.

ZURI



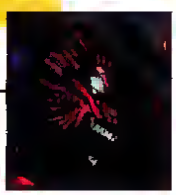
Mentor and companion to T'Challa whose duty and loyalty date back to the Panther's father *T'Chaka*.

THE DORA MILAJE— OKOYE & NAKIA



T'Challa's chauffeur and personal assistant, who also serve as his bodyguards.

MEPHISTO



The Bad Guy.

PREVIOUSLY...



Everett Ross attempted to clarify to his boss, exactly what had happened since he picked up T'Challa and his party at the airport the previous day.



The Black Panther stopped two gang bangers.

They tried to order Chinese food.





Were arrested after trying to regain Ross's stolen wallet at a gentlemen's club.

And questioned the woman who was in charge of T'challa's embattled Tomorrow Fund.



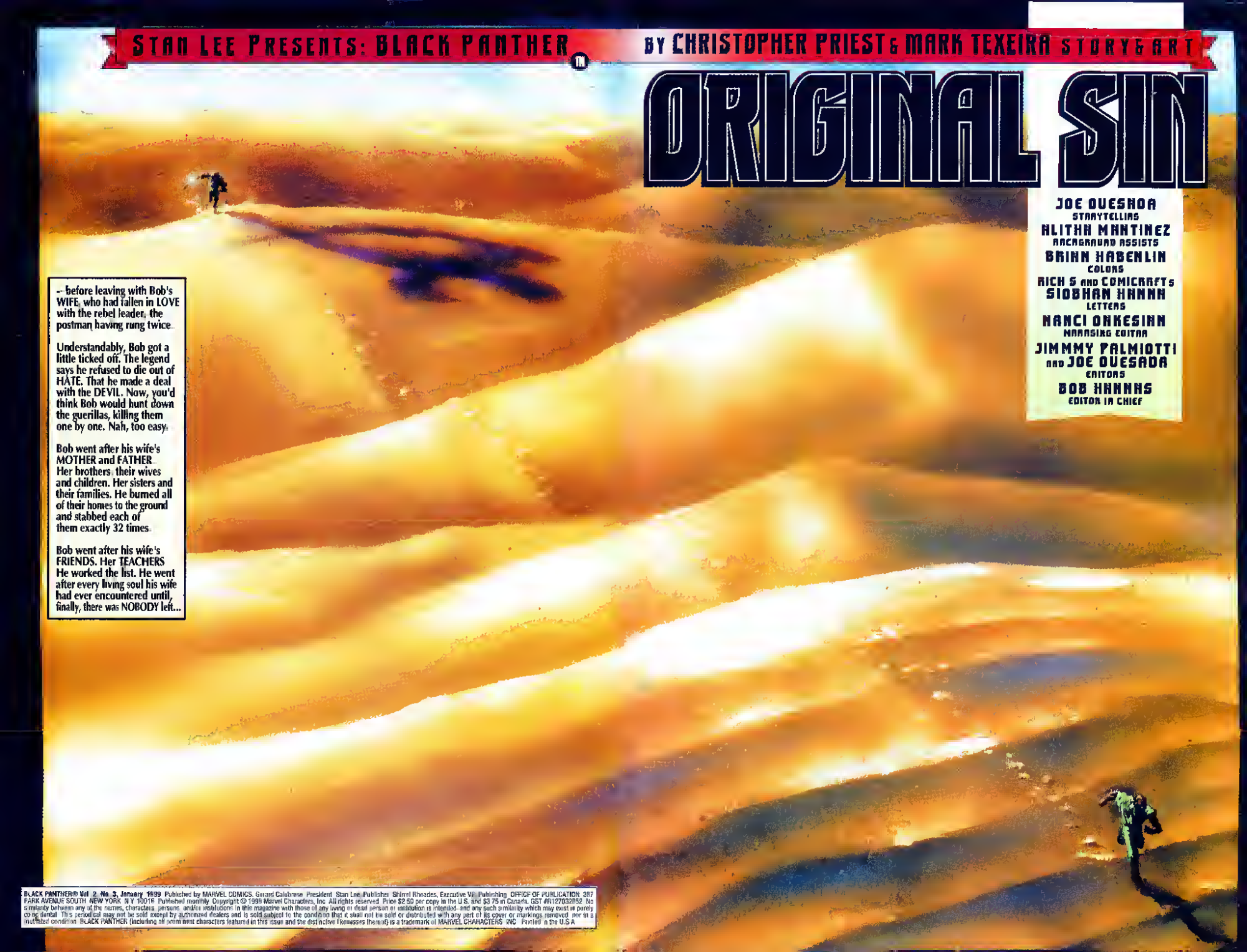


Don't forget Mephisto.

Design by COMICRAFT's JM & Eric Eng Wong

HEART AND SOLE





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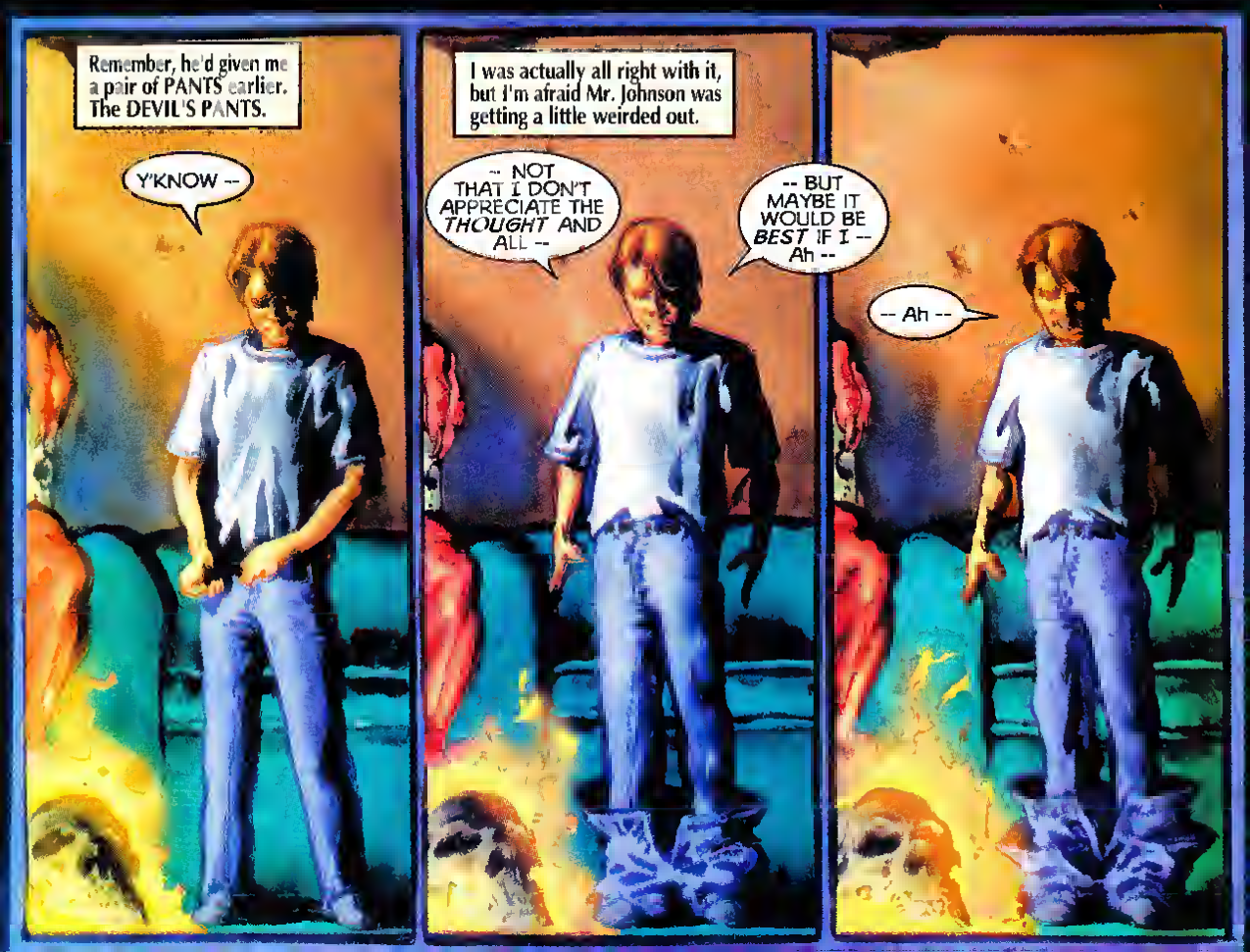

...except KALEB, a merchant from a nearby village.
He had once sold Bob's wife a pair of SHOES.

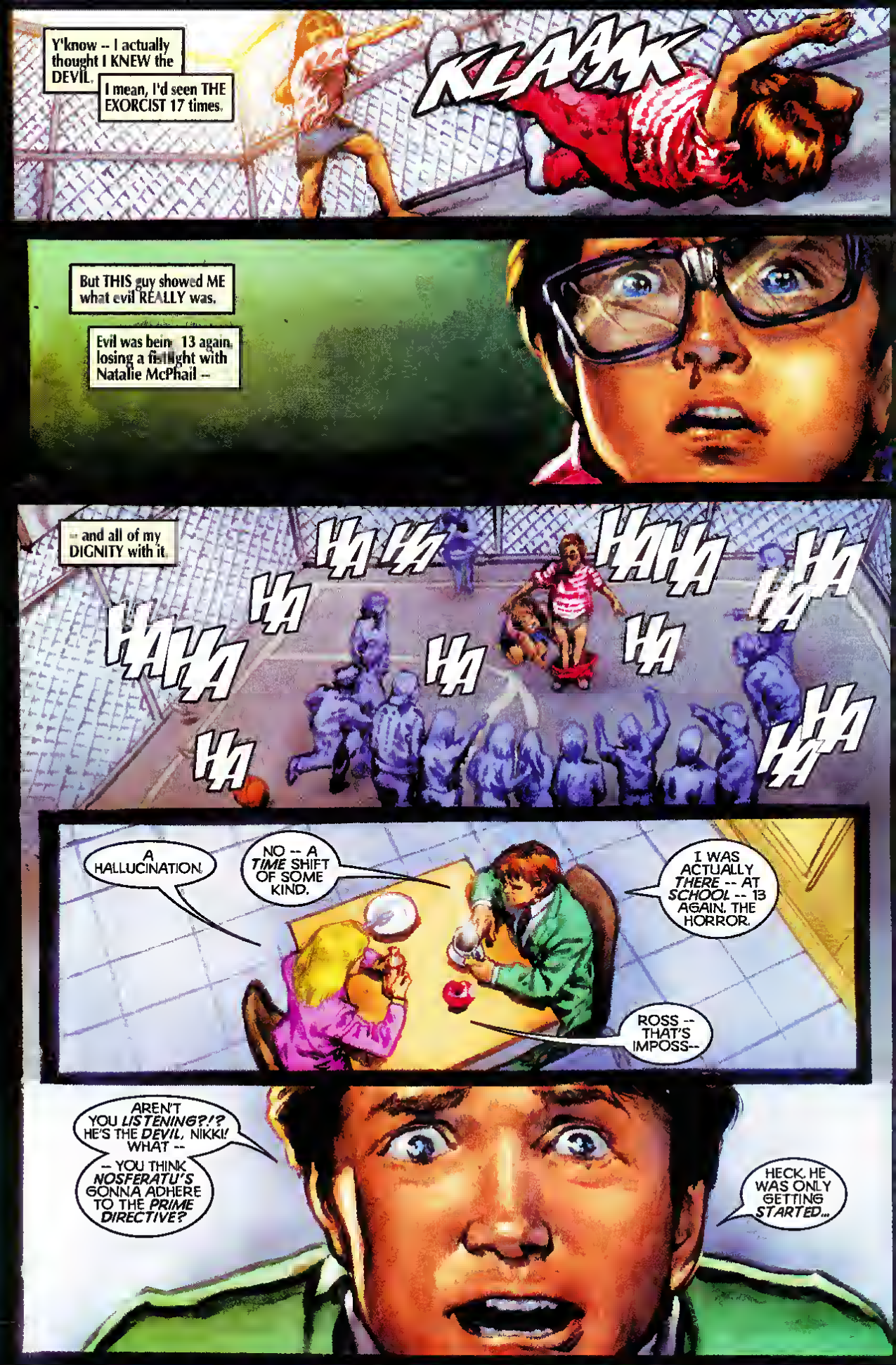

YOU GONNA FINISH THAT?
AND "BOB" IS THIS "ACHEBE"?
IT'S JUST A RUMOR KINDA LIKE LIONEL RICHIE'S CAREER.
A FRIEND AT O.N.I. SENT ME A FILE ON THIS ACHEBE GUY --*
*Office of Naval Intelligence -- J & J.
-- THE REVEREND DOCTOR MICHAEL IBN AL-HAJJ ACHEBE, Ph.D., YALE LAW WITH MULTIPLE DEGREES IN PSYCHOLOGY, POLITICAL SCIENCE, AND DIVINITY.
REPATRIATED TO GHUDAZA JUST BEFORE HIS COUNTRY BECAME EMBROILED IN ETHNIC WARS THAT LEFT HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS DEAD --
-- AND ACHEBE IN A WAKANDAN REFUGEE CAMP.
Which, you may recall, was one big love fest.
Refugees from differing tribes hating each other, and all of them hating the WAKANDANS...
...and their KING.


SO THE RUMOR IS *TRUE*, UKATANA.
NO GOOD DEED *DOES* GO UNPUNISHED.
THIS IS A TIME OF *GREAT TURMOIL*, ACHEBE.
IGNORANCE AND FEAR ARE *EASILY* EXPLOITED.
*Ukatana = Zulu for "kitten" — J & J
WHICH EXPLAINS *ME*.
ERUDITION AND ELITISM ARE EVEN *EASIER* TO EXPLOIT.
WHICH EXPLAINS *YOU*.
THE MIGHTY UKATANA -- FETISH GOD OF THE FAT, THE SPOILED AND THE SELF-ABSORBED.
T'CHAKA MUST BE GETTING A LITTLE *CHAFED* FROM ALL THE *360'S* HE'S TURNING IN HIS *GRAVE*.
WHAT DO YOU *WANT*, CLERIC?
PEACE, OF COURSE.
AND MAYBE ONE OF THOSE NEW *MINI-DISC* PLAYERS.
THAT'S IT. UKAT, I'LL SELL OUT MY COUNTRYMEN FOR THE NEW WU-TANG CLAN CD.
LET'S *SHAKE* ON IT.
YOU ARE *SAFE* -- YOU HAVE *FOOD* -- MEDICAL ATTENTION --
HOW RUDE OF US. TRAPPED BETWEEN THE *DEATH* IN OUR HOMELAND AND THE *PENS* HERE --
-- WE IGNORANT GHUDAZAI NEGLECT TO FALL TO OUR KNEES BEFORE OUR NOBLE SAVIORS.
YOU FOOLISH WHORES -- SO VERY CONVINCED THIS MISERY WAS SOMEHOW THE PRODUCT OF OUR OWN *IGNORANCE*.
SO *CERTAIN* YOU WILL NEVER FIND YOURSELVES IN *RAGS*, PENNED UP LIKE *ANIMALS* --
-- FIGHTING FOR EVEN THE *SMALLEST* SHRED OF *DIGNITY*.
I WILL MAKE MYSELF *AVAILABLE* WHEN YOU ACTUALLY HAVE SOMETHING TO *SAY*, ACHEBE

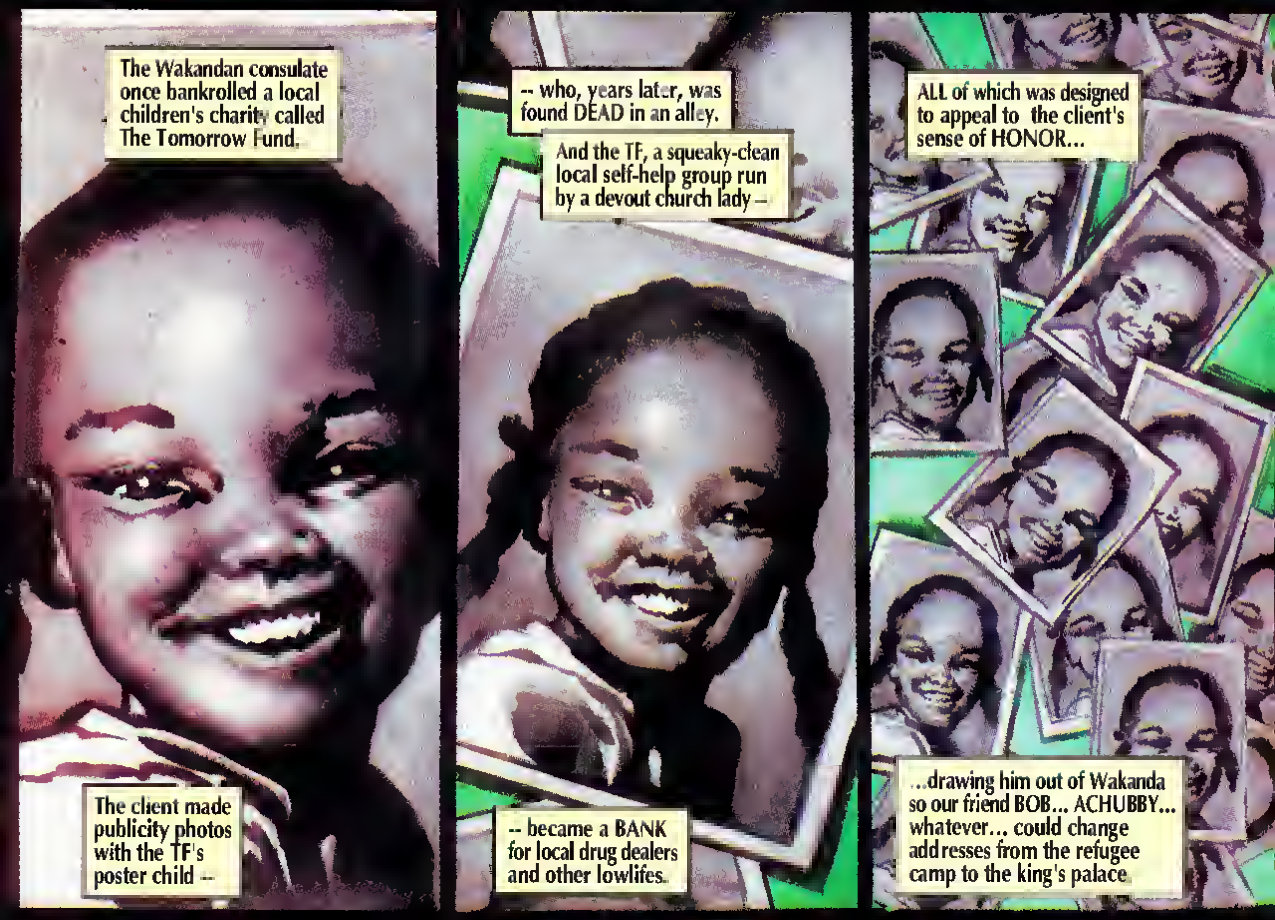

IT'S A DATE.
SO, BASICALLY, WE'RE TALKING A NUTTY, EVIL BISHOP TUTU?
NOBODY'S EVIL NIKKI. THEY'RE MORALLY CHALLENGED
BUT, YES, ACHEBE'S A GUY WHO DEFINITELY EATS HIS PIZZA CRUST FIRST
AND YOU THINK HIS BLOODLUST WAS, WHAT, REKINDLED BY ALL THE KILLING IN THE ETHNIC WARS?
NIKKI -- I THINK THIS GUY CAUSED THE ETHNIC WARS. MAYBE JUST TO GET HIMSELF POSITIONED IN WAKANDA
AND I'M SURE HE WAS BEHIND THE STATESIDE SCANDAL THAT GOT THE CLIENT OUT OF WAKANDA -- A PLAN YEARS IN THE MAKING.
I DUNNO, NIKKI -- I THINK THIS GUY IS -- WELL -- MORALLY CHALLENGED.
MAYBE HE DID MAKE A DEAL WITH THE DEVIL. HAVING PERSONALLY MET HIM, I CAN TELL YOU --
-- GETTING AN APPOINTMENT WITH THE LORD OF FLIES ISN'T THAT HARD TO DO...

CUE Ms. BLAIR


Remember, he'd given me a pair of PANTS earlier. The DEVIL'S PANTS.
Y'KNOW --
I was actually all right with it, but I'm afraid Mr. Johnson was getting a little weirded out.
-- NOT THAT I DON'T APPRECIATE THE THOUGHT AND ALL --
-- BUT MAYBE IT WOULD BE BEST IF I -- Ah --
-- Ah --


Y'know -- I actually thought I KNEW the DEVIL.
I mean, I'd seen THE EXORCIST 17 times.
KLAAAK
But THIS guy showed ME what evil REALLY was.
Evil was being 13 again, losing a fistfight with Natalie McPhail --
-- and all of my DIGNITY with it.
HA HA HA
HA HA HA
HA HA HA
HA HA HA
A HALLUCINATION.
NO -- A TIME SHIFT OF SOME KIND.
I WAS ACTUALLY THERE -- AT SCHOOL -- 13 AGAIN. THE HORROR.
ROSS -- THAT'S IMPOSS--
AREN'T YOU LISTENING?!? HE'S THE DEVIL, NIKKI! WHAT --
-- YOU THINK NOSFERATU'S GONNA ADHERE TO THE PRIME DIRECTIVE?
HECK. HE WAS ONLY GETTING STARTED...

THE BEGINNING



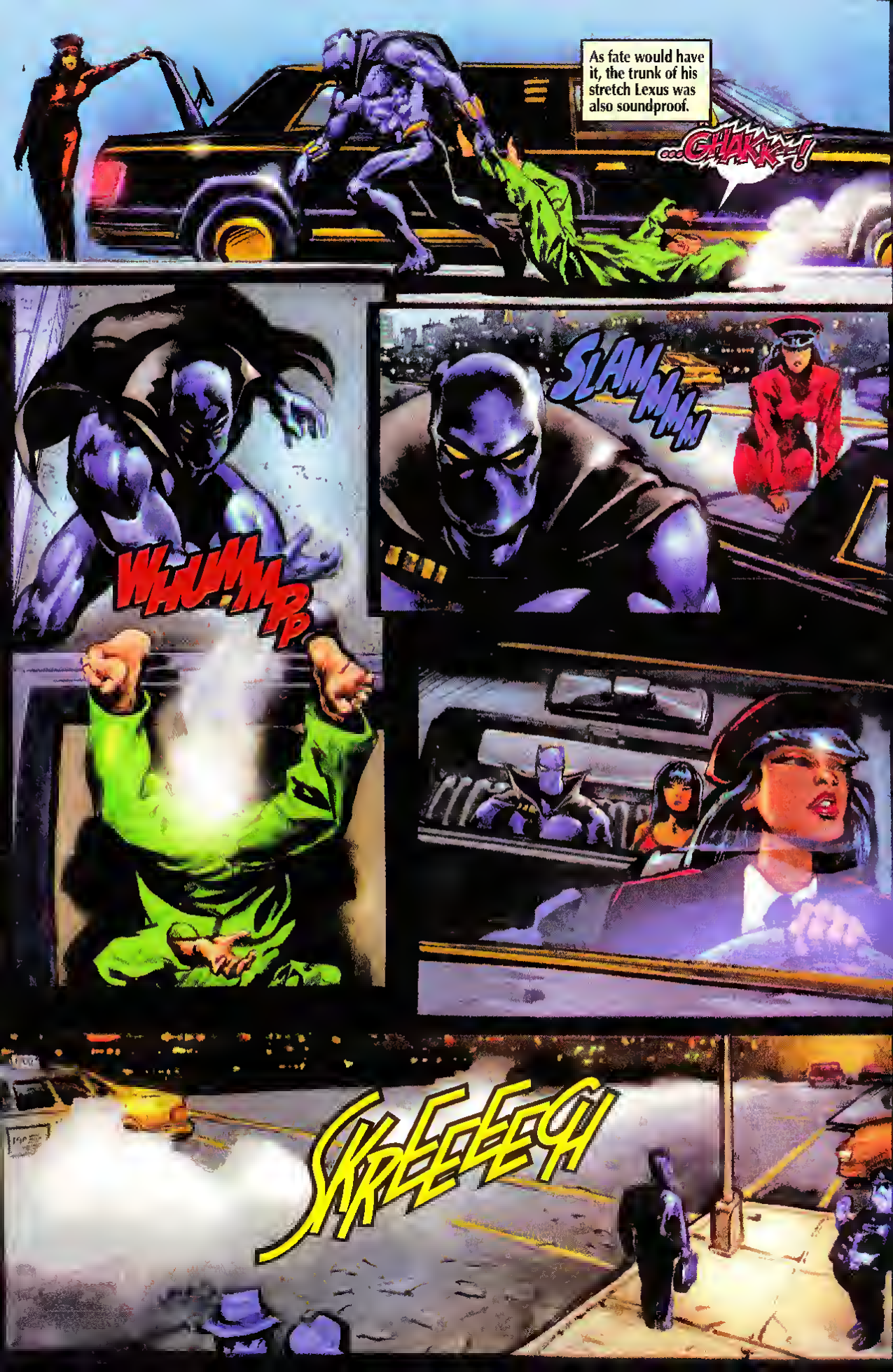



-- the client is a man of remarkable focus.
A child had died.
Someone had to ANSWER.
GHAAAAA
His name was Delroy Richmond and he was about as SICK as sickos come.
He made liberal use of the TF's money laundering facilities. He was also --
-- the man who left little Jamie Robins in that alley.
RRRP
This gem of information courtesy of the client's meeting with Sheila Vicar an hour before.


Suffice to say that, in addition to being a CROOK and a CREEP, Richmond had truly sick appetites.
The extent of the EVIL unleashed at the Tomorrow Fund was STAGGERING... incomprehensible to the client.
It was as though the entire organization had become INFESTED with a VIRUS.
Brought about by a man who'd sold his SOUL.
Faced with this evidence, I'm sure the client could only conclude the legends were TRUE --
KER
AKK
-- Achebe had indeed forged a PACT with Satan, and all the powers of darkness were focused on destroying everything the client cherished.
U.S. law often annoyed the client, who came from a land where wrong was wrong and justice was chasing a shoe salesman 80 miles across a desert.
This was the land of O.J. and JonBenet.
A universe of plea bargains and talking points.
N... NO... NO...


And the client had had his fill of us.


Richmond sank like a STONE, which made it harder for the client to keep up --
-- but not impossible. Thick cords of steel sinew --
-- much like my OWN-- locked up and propelled the client downward.
Or so I imagine. t wasn't there.
Remember, I was WAITING for the guy -- making SMALL TALK with BEELZEBUB.
The soles of the client's boots were thick pads of a VIBRANIUM alloy.
Vibrating the pads at different frequencies gave them multiple uses, including running up the sides of buildings --
-- and landing from heights of 50 feet. All without making a SOUND.


As fate would have it, the trunk of his stretch Lexus was also soundproof.
...GHAKK-!
WHUMMP
SLAMMMM
SKREEEECH


YOU...YOU CAME LIKE I *KNEW* YOU WOULD.
YOU *FOUND* HIM. DIDN'T YOU -- FOUND THE MONSTER WHO KILLED MY LITTLE GIRL --?
SO THIS IS IT. THE LAST FACE MY LITTLE GIRL EVER SAW.
I SHOULD HATE YOU. I SHOULD *KILL* YOU.
BUT JAMIE TAUGHT ME BETTER THAN THAT.
AND I'M SURE YOUR FELLOW *INMATES* WILL TAKE CARE OF THOSE THINGS *FOR* ME
THANK YOU, PANTHER IT'S *FINALLY OVER*...

For HER. But the client knew, for HIM, avenging Jamie Robins' death was only the BEGINNING.
He'd collared the man RESPONSIBLE...but not the one to BLAME...


...a guy he saw only in MIRRORS.
Someone once said the DEVIL only comes to you when you're at your LOWEST.


The client CRUCIFYING himself was ALL the invitation Old Smokey needed...

THE CONSCIENCE OF THE KING




I AM HERE, MY LIEGE --!
-OOPH-!
<BOY.>*
<APOLOGIES, MY LIEGE.>
*From Wakandan -- J & J.

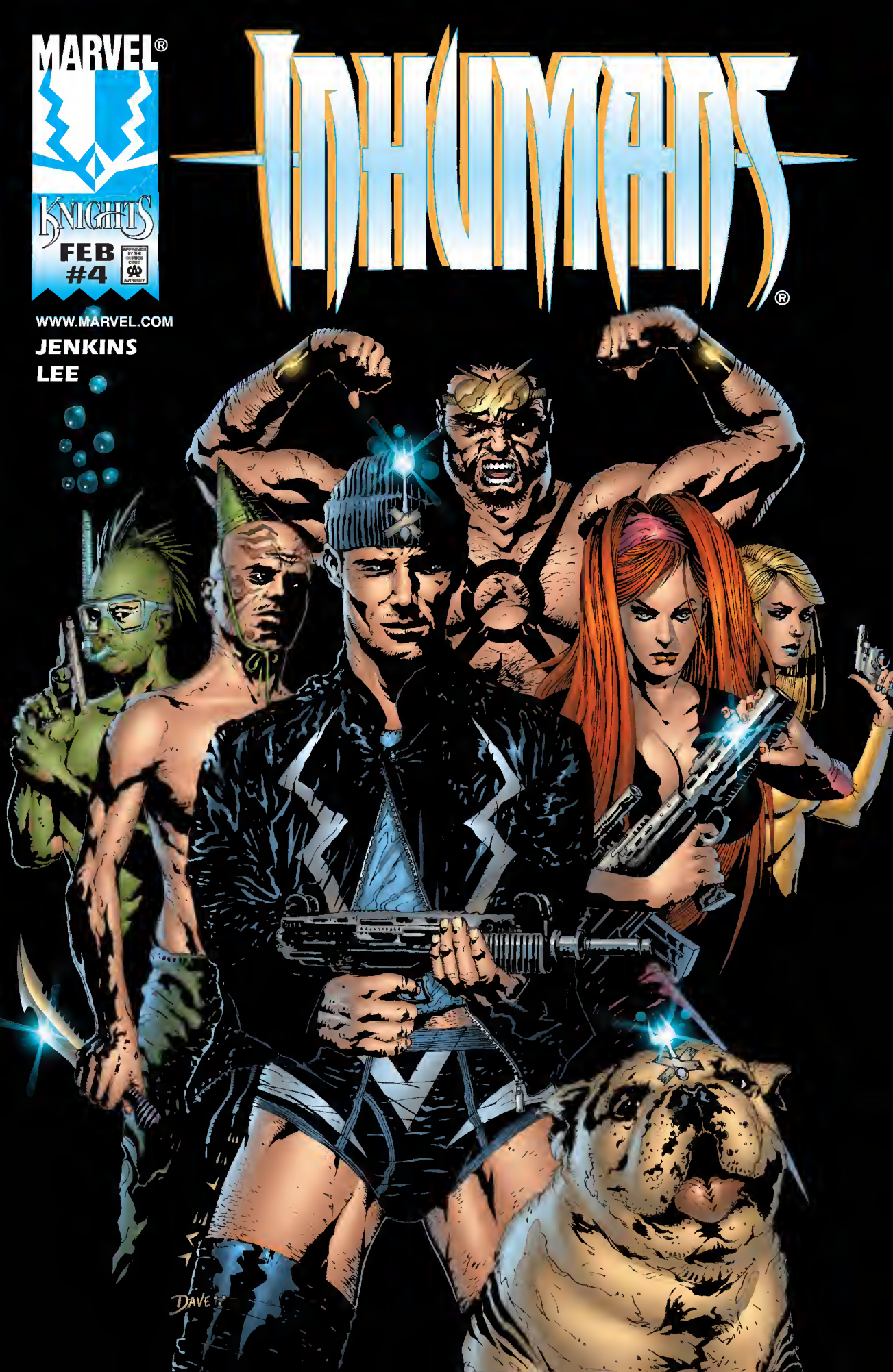

<FORGIVE ME...>
<YOU SHALL BE KING SOME DAY, BOY. ACT LIKE ONE>
<THINK LIKE ONE>
<I SHALL, FATHER. I >
<...WAIT... THAT..THAT MAN...>
<YES, BOY -- HE IS ULYSSES KLAW -- AN AMERICAN IVORY HUNTER WHO -->
<FATHER -- NO -- HE -- HE IS EVIL -- I KNOW IT!>
<BOY! HAVE YOU LOST YOUR MIND --?!>
<HE IS A MURDERER MY LORD! HE WILL KILL YOU --!>
<Oh? ARE YOU -->
<-- CERTAIN OF THIS?>
<HINDSIGHT TRULY IS THAT MUCH CLEARER, ISN'T IT, UKATANA?>
-- ?! JAMIE -- ?!
DON'T BE RIDICULOUS JAMIE'S DEAD.
AND SHE'S NOT THE ONLY ONE. JUST THE ONE YOU CAN'T MAKE A PROPER EXCUSE FOR UKATANA.


LOST SOULS -- ACCEPTABLE LOSSES -- CASUALTIES OF POLITICAL PROCESS.
YOUR FATHER COULD SLEEP AT NIGHT BECAUSE HE UNDERSTOOD THESE THINGS
YOU, ON THE OTHER HAND ARE A WEAK KING.
A MAN OF KINDNESS AND CHARITY. AS THOUGH DECISIONS YOU MAKE COULD ACTUALLY SAVE LIVES.
BLOOD IS BLOOD, YOU ARROGANT FOOL.
ONLY YOUR FOCUS -- YOUR STRENGTH OF WILL -- DETERMINES WHO SHALL DIE.
THE CROWN IS NOT FOR IDEALISTS AND ARTISTS AND DREAMERS, BUT FOR MEN OF IRON.
MEN SMART ENOUGH TO SEE THE WIND BLOWING.
WHO ARE YOU? DO YOU SERVE ACHEBE --?
I AM CALLED MANY THINGS, BUT MY TRUE NAME IS UNPRONOUNCEABLE.
AND ACHEBE IS MERELY A MEANS TO MY END --


– MUCH AS THAT FLYSPECK OF A CHILD WAS A MEANS TO *HIS OWN.*
WHAT DO YOU *WANT* OF ME?!
I AM...A *COLLECTOR* OF SORTS
I'VE GOT *QUITE* A *HOBBY ROOM.*
YOU HAVE SOMETHING I *CRAVE.* I AM WILLING TO *TRADE* FOR IT.
-- ?! *MONICA* --?!
YOU HAVE ONLY TO *WISH IT,* AND I WILL DELIVER ACHEBE TO YOUR JUSTICE. ALL WILL BE WELL IN WAKANDA AGAIN.
...MONICA...
IF YOU BUT *WISH IT.*
IF YOU CALL ME *MASTER.*

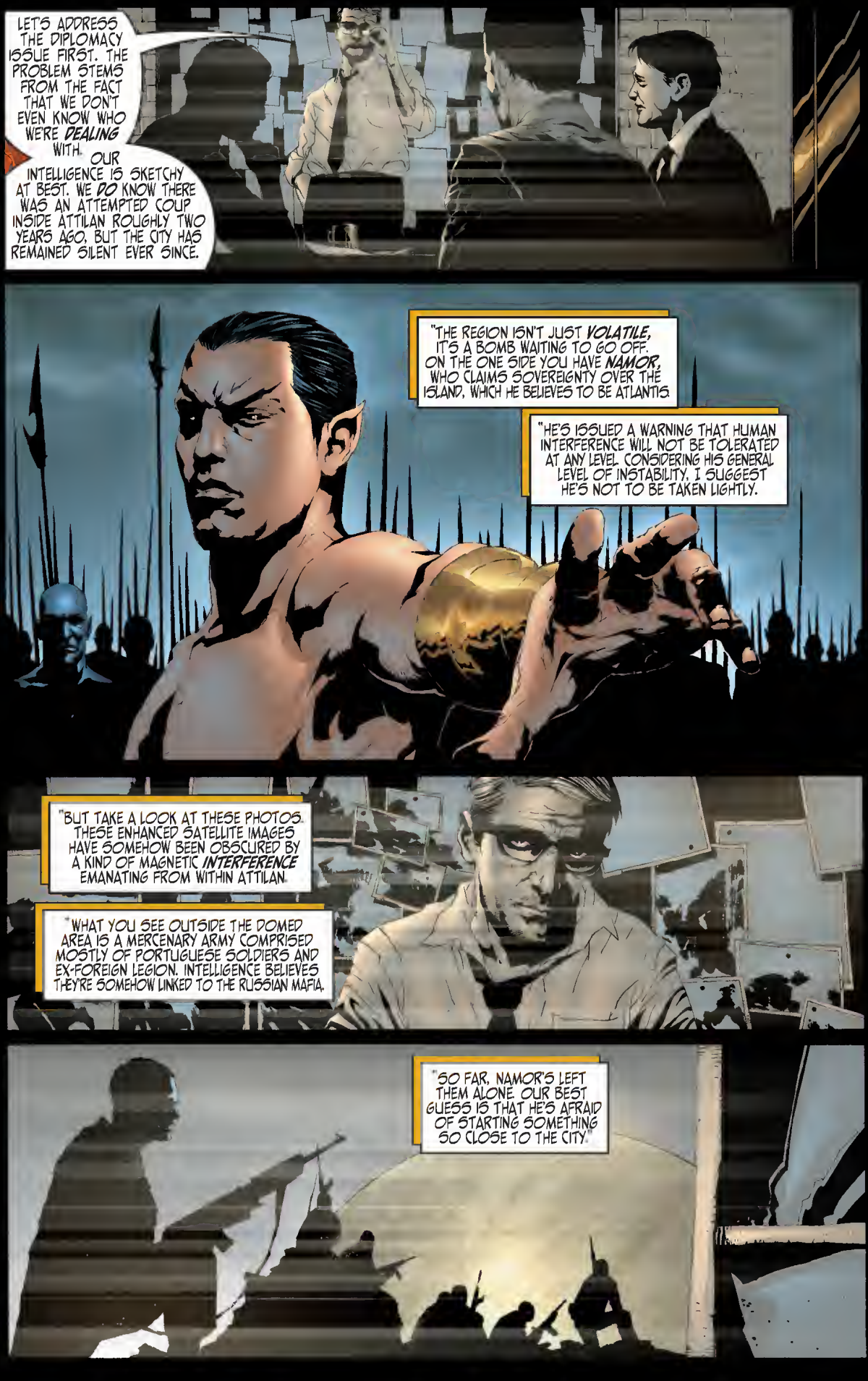

-- ?!?
NAKIA --?!


The DORA MILAJE were sort of wives-in-training.
<HAVE... HAVE I DISPLEASED YOU, MY KING --?>
The client always insisted that role be CEREMONIAL.
He would NEVER put his hands on them. See, in their custom, if he ever -- ah -- closed the deal --
<BELOVED -- STOP THE CAR.>
-- it would be a declaration of intent. And the girl could NEVER marry ANYONE but the king.
The client was CERTAIN his enemy knew that.
Which confirmed his fear that his enemy was not so concerned with his DEATH...
...as his DESTRUCTION.
He left the girls to clear his head.
And, I'm not sure, but I think that was about when all the SHOOTING started...
NEXT:
THE PRICE
THE SHOOTING STARTS...


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JENKINS
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DAVE



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LET'S ADDRESS THE DIPLOMACY ISSUE FIRST. THE PROBLEM STEMS FROM THE FACT THAT WE DON'T EVEN KNOW WHO WE'RE *DEALING* WITH. OUR INTELLIGENCE IS SKETCHY AT BEST. WE *DO* KNOW THERE WAS AN ATTEMPTED COUP INSIDE ATTILAN ROUGHLY TWO YEARS AGO, BUT THE CITY HAS REMAINED SILENT EVER SINCE.
"THE REGION ISN'T JUST *VOLATILE*, IT'S A BOMB WAITING TO GO OFF. ON THE ONE SIDE YOU HAVE *NAMOR*, WHO CLAIMS SOVEREIGNTY OVER THE ISLAND, WHICH HE BELIEVES TO BE ATLANTIS.
"HE'S ISSUED A WARNING THAT HUMAN INTERFERENCE WILL NOT BE TOLERATED AT ANY LEVEL. CONSIDERING HIS GENERAL LEVEL OF INSTABILITY, I SUGGEST HE'S NOT TO BE TAKEN LIGHTLY.
"BUT TAKE A LOOK AT THESE PHOTOS. THESE ENHANCED SATELLITE IMAGES HAVE SOMEHOW BEEN OBSCURED BY A KIND OF MAGNETIC *INTERFERENCE* EMANATING FROM WITHIN ATTILAN.
"WHAT YOU SEE OUTSIDE THE DOMED AREA IS A MERCENARY ARMY COMPRISED MOSTLY OF PORTUGUESE SOLDIERS AND EX-FOREIGN LEGION. INTELLIGENCE BELIEVES THEY'RE SOMEHOW LINKED TO THE RUSSIAN MAFIA.
"SO FAR, NAMOR'S LEFT THEM ALONE. OUR BEST GUESS IS THAT HE'S AFRAID OF STARTING SOMETHING SO CLOSE TO THE CITY."



STAN LEE PRESENTS: CHINESE WHISPERS

PAUL JENKINS Wrote It Down
JAE LEE DAVID KEMP Drew It Out Colored It Up
RS&COMICRAFT/LA Lettered It Carefully
JOE & JIMMY Told It Right
NANCI DAKESIAN Passed It On
BOB HARRAS Misheard It

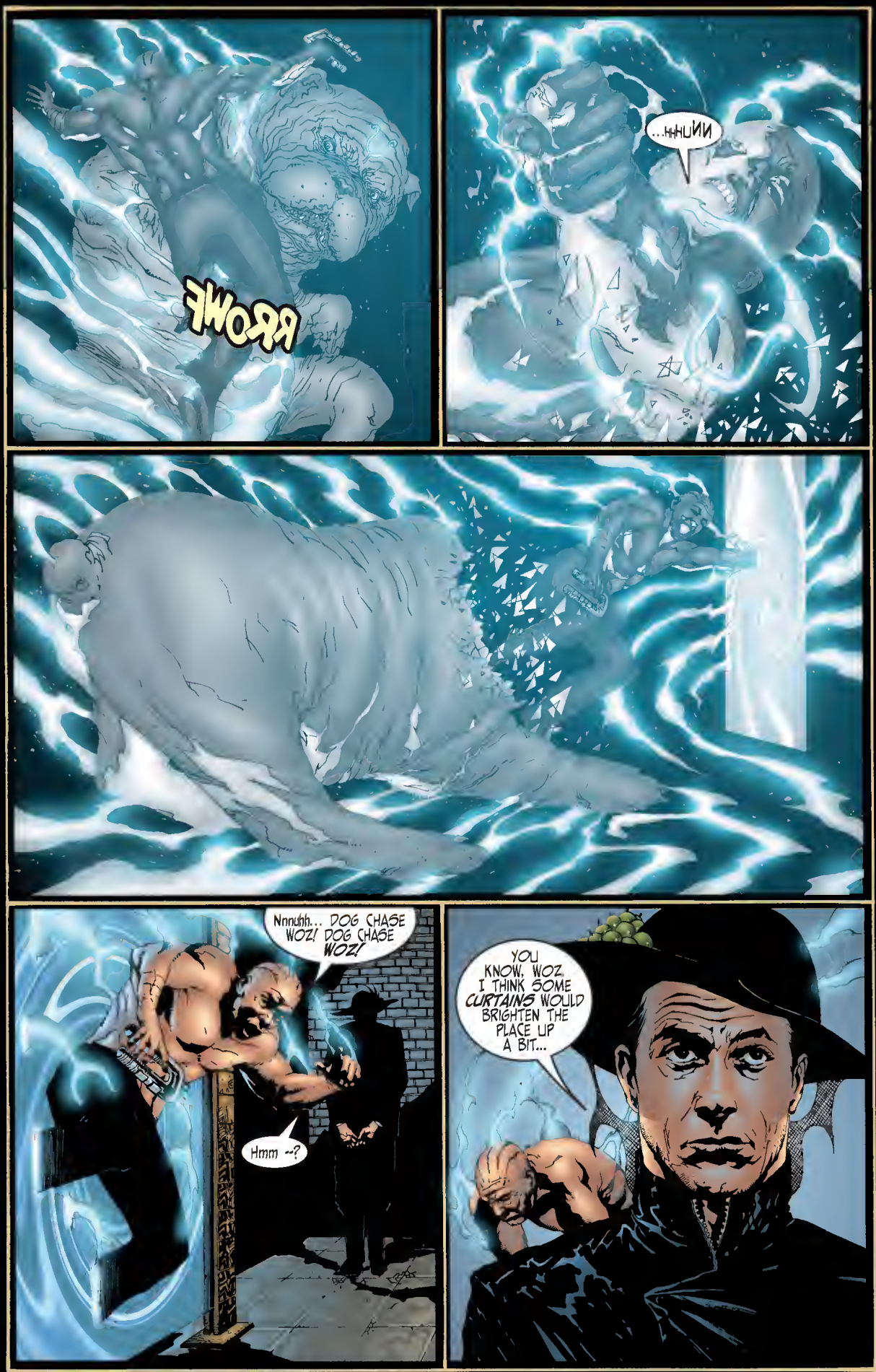

Tch...Would somebody please open a window? It smells like GOAT in here.
That's most amusing, Maximus, but I have a BETTER joke for you: We are well aware of the... DISTURBANCES in your cell.
While our surveillance vids show NOTHING, some DISCREPANCIES have been revealed.
Believe me, I WILL find out how you've managed to circumvent the system. Whatever you're planning, I'll know about it before YOU do.
Admit it, you big lug...you're both just jealous of my new hat.
My new friend there brought it for me. Don't you want to say "Hello"?
But of course, you can't SEE him, can you? Not with your minds completely under my control. NO ONE can see anything I don't want them to --
ENOUGH! This buffoonery no longer amuses me. You drooling idiot. You're plotting something, and believe me, you're going to tell me what it IS.
You WILL, if you know what's GOOD for you --
HA HA!
Or WHAT, Gorgon...you'll have Karnak put me in PRISON? Oh, whatever shall I DO?
-Ah-hehh-


Hmph. WELL... THAT'S THE END OF VISITING HOURS, BOYS. I ASSUME YOU'LL SEE YOURSELVES OUT?
Oh, AND GIVE MY REGARDS TO THE FAMILY. TELL THEM I'LL LOOK THEM UP WHEN I GET OUT OF HERE. AND TELL THE FISH I'LL WANT MY ROOM BACK.
LISTEN TO ME WELL, MAXIMUS: THIS PRISON IS WITHOUT FLAW. THE WALLS, FLOORS AND CEILINGS ARE IMPENETRABLE.
DESPITE YOUR DELUSIONS OF GRANDEUR, THE GUARDS REMAIN LOYAL TO THEIR KING. THEY WILL GET TO THE ROOT OF YOUR LITTLE INTRIGUES. BE ASSURED OF THAT.
SO INDULGE YOUR FANTASIES IF YOU WILL. KEEP UP YOUR PRETENSES. PLAY YOUR POINTLESS GAMES FROM WITHIN.
YOU HAVE ALL THE TIME IN THE WORLD...
I CAN GET OUT, ANYTIME I WANT TO. BUT I JUST DON'T WANT TO.
NOT YET...
I DON'T THINK THEY LIKED YOU, WOZ.


I THINK THE FUNDAMENTAL QUESTION IS WHETHER WE CAN HOLD THESE INHUMANS -- IF THAT'S WHAT THEY ARE -- TO THE SAME STANDARDS AS HUMANITY --
YO, LISTEN...WE SAYIN' THEY ANY LESS THAN US 'CAUSE THEY DIFFERENT? 'CAUSE LAS' TIME I CHECK WE KISSED THAT ATTITUDE GOODBYE A LONG TIME AGO.
BUT DON'T YOU SEE, THAT'S MY POINT? IF THESE PEOPLE CONTINUE TO ISOLATE THEMSELVES, THEY LEAVE IT TO US TO DRAW CONCLUSIONS ABOUT THEIR MOTIVES --
UNLESS WE HAPPEN TO HAVE INVITED THE MAN IN THE KNOW ONTO OUR SHOW. LET'S BRING IN REED RICHARDS FOR A MOMENT...
REED, WE'VE ALL HEARD WILDLY INACCURATE RUMORS LINKING YOU WITH EVERYONE FROM MARILYN MANSON TO SPIDER-MAN TO THE CIA...
...BUT I HAVE IT ON GOOD AUTHORITY FROM MY FIVE-YEAR-OLD NEPHEW THAT YOU'VE BEEN INSIDE ATTILAN. SO, WHY THE COLD SHOULDER? AFRAID WE'LL STEAL THEIR WOMEN?
NO, I THINK THEY'RE DEATHLY AFRAID OF BEING INVITED TO APPEAR ON THIS SHOW.
HAHA
HAHAHAHA


EITHER THAT, OR THEY'RE AFRAID OF BEING PUNCTURED BY REED'S RAPIER WIT.
BUT SERIOUSLY, REED...SPILL THE METAPHORICAL BEANS -- WHAT GIVES WITH ATTILAN?
WELL, ATTILAN'S A RIDDLE WRAPPED UP IN AN ENIGMA INSIDE A CONUNDRUM.
WHILE I CAN NEITHER CONFIRM NOR DENY ANY SPECULATION, AT THE REQUEST OF THE INHUMANS THEMSELVES, I CAN SAY THAT THEY ARE A VERY REMARKABLE PEOPLE.
"LET'S PUT IT INTO PERSPECTIVE: ATTILAN WAS FOUNDED BEFORE THE ANCIENT SUMERIANS ROSE TO PROMINENCE. THEY'VE LIVED IN SELF-IMPOSED EXILE FOR COUNTLESS THOUSANDS OF YEARS.
ARTIST'S RENDITION
"AND IN ALL THAT TIME, THEY HAVE REMAINED NEUTRAL DESPITE INTOLERABLE PRESSURE. DO WE BOMB SWEDEN JUST BECAUSE THEY DON'T JOIN OUR CONFLICTS? OF COURSE NOT --"
REED, BUDDY, YOU MIGHT BE ON TO SOMETHING THERE. I SAY WE NUKE EVERYONE WE'RE AFRAID OF, STARTING WITH CINCINNATI.
HEHH... WELL, REST ASSURED, THE INHUMANS POSE NO THREAT TO US.
"IF ANYTHING, WE ARE A THREAT TO THEM."

ARRRRR
ARRRRR


RROWF
...nnnnn
Nnnuhh... DOG CHASE WOZ! DOG CHASE WOZ!
Hmm --?
YOU KNOW, WOZ, I THINK SOME CURTAINS WOULD BRIGHTEN THE PLACE UP A BIT...


MY POWER IS WITHOUT QUESTION. WITH MY OTHER VOICE, I CAN DESTROY THIS WORLD.
AND YET THERE REMAIN THOSE WHO DO NOT BELIEVE, BROTHERS AN' SISTERS. THOSE WHO WOULD HUNT US DOWN, LIKE ANIMALS.
THOSE WHO RIDICULE US BECAUSE THEY DO NOT UNDERSTAND US. THOSE WHO TREMBLE IN FEAR AT THE RIGHTEOUS IDEA OF OUR EXISTENCE.
"BUT THEY DO NOT SEE THE APPROACH OF ARMAGEDDON AS WE DO. THEY CANNOT SEE THAT THE MILLENNIUM IS THE GATEWAY TO A NEW ORDER.
"THE BEASTS ARE AT OUR GATES BROTHERS AN' SISTERS... READY TO SLAUGHTER OUR CHILDREN WITH FIRE AND BRIMSTONE. THEY ARE AN INFERIOR SPECIES WHOSE TIME HAS COME AND GONE."
FBI
FBI


TO THEM I SAY "NO!" WE ARE BEYOND YOUR ENVY AND YOUR DESIRES AND YOUR GREED.
TO THEM I SAY "NO!" YOUR LIVES ARE AS UNIMPORTANT AS THE DUST YOU CAME FROM. GOD HAS A NEW DESIGN: THE MIGHTY SHALL INHERIT THE EARTH.
TO THEM I SAY "NO!" YOUR LAWS DO NOT APPLY TO US. WE ARE THE SOVEREIGN NATION OF NEW ATTILAN.
IT DON'T MAKE NO DIFFERENCE, LUPINSKI. YOU STILL GOTTA PAY TAXES LIKE EVERYONE ELSE.
FBI


... AND SO, DESPITE REPEATED AND PERSISTENT DIPLOMATIC OVERTURES, THIS MYSTERIOUS RACE OF PEOPLE REMAIN FIRMLY ENTRENCHED INSIDE THEIR DOMED CITY.
WHILE THE WHITE HOUSE HAS SO FAR DECLINED ANY OFFICIAL COMMENT, MANY INSIDERS FEEL THAT THEIR PRESENCE IN SUCH A VOLATILE REGION HELPS MAINTAIN THE STATUS QUO...
... AND THEREFORE, IF WE BLAH BLAH BLAH THE DYNAMICS OF INHUMANISM, IS IT NOT POSSIBLE THAT WE BLAH BLAH BLAH AND SO DISMISS THE JUNGIAN ARCHETYPE THAT BLAH BLAH BLAH..?
YOU LYING)BLEEP(-- YOU TOL' ME YOU WAS AN INHUMAN! YOU SAID WE WAS GONNA HAVE)BLEEP(SUPERBABIES --
AH NEVER DID SAY THAT, SHIRLENE, AN' YOU KNOW IT!
DUDE, CHECK OUT KYLE'S NEW ART.
DUDE... KARNAK.

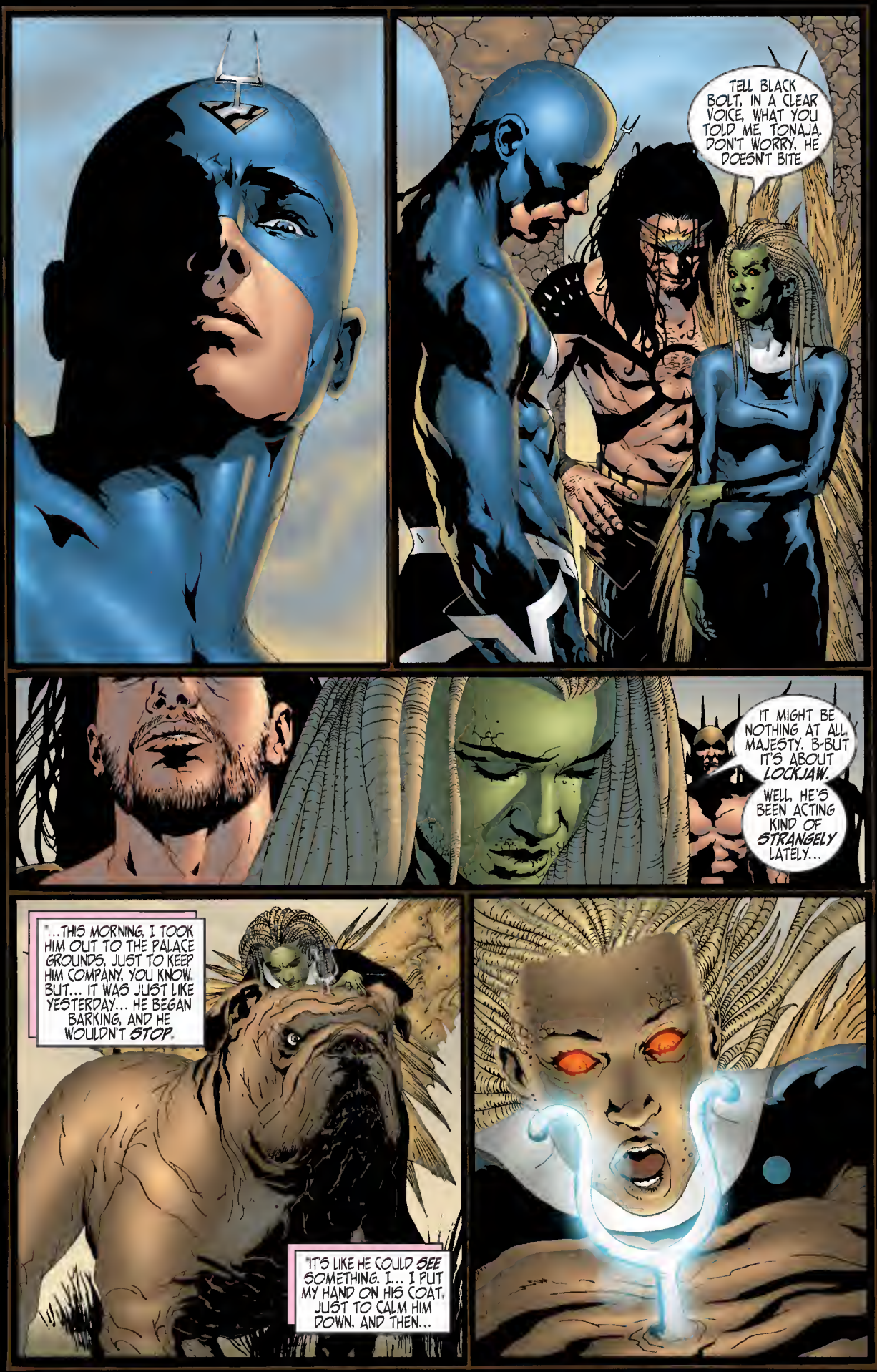

PHF! EVERYBODY KNOWS THEY AIN'T REAL...
KRYZSTOF! PETER! IF YOU DON'T STOP TEASING THAT ANIMAL, YOU KNOW WHAT'LL HAPPEN --
-- THE DEVIL DOG WILL COME FOR YOU ONE NIGHT AND SPIRIT YOU AWAY.
... AND IN OTHER NEWS, THE WHITE HOUSE TODAY RELEASED A STATEMENT CONCERNING DISCUSSIONS WITH THE FABLED CITY OF ATTILAN.
APPARENTLY, THE PRESIDENT WANTS TO RELOCATE SOMEWHERE HE CAN WEAR HIS UNDERWEAR IN PUBLIC...
THE ANCIENT ONES ARE OUT THERE, ON THE WIND. IF YOU LISTEN, DO YOU HEAR THEM?
IS DAREDEVIL THE ANTI-CHRIST ?
ELVIS SIGHTED IN ATTILAN
FACE
TIME
BLACK PANTHER TERRORIZES NEW YORK
I'LL BET THEY'RE JUS' LIKE WE ARE.


PLEASE TRY TO UNDERSTAND, MINISTER -- THE RED ROOM IS A TRAINING FACILITY FOR OUR AGENTS...
... NOT A TRAVELLING CIRCUS.
YES, YES, I UNDERSTAND... BUT THE ANSWER REMAINS THE SAME.
NO UNAUTHORIZED PERSONNEL, NOT EVEN YOU.
THEN TAKE IT TO THE NEWSPAPERS. ISN'T THAT WHY WE INVENTED GLASNOST --?
STALYENKO? STALYENKO!
ARE YOU STILL THERE?
HH-HH!!
Mm... I APOLOGIZE FOR THE MORON. HE SEEMS TO BE REVERTING TO TYPE.


IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME, YURI. HOW ON EARTH DID YOU MANAGE TO GET SO *FAT* ON A KGB SALARY?
I HAVE... *OTHER* INTERESTS, LORD MAXIMUS.
ONE DOES NOT SURVIVE SO LONG WITHOUT BEING QUICK TO ADAPT.
Mm... YES. I HEAR THE RUSSIAN BLACK MARKET'S BEEN QUITE *LUCRATIVE* SINCE COMMUNISM KICKED THE BUCKET.
Mm... BUT I'M SURE YOU'RE WONDERING WHY I'VE ASKED YOU HERE.
CIGAR? THEY'RE CUBAN.
WELL, THE TRUTH IS, YOU AND I ARE IN THE BUSINESS OF RECIPROCATION. A FAVOR FOR A *FAVOR*, EH?
I AM A BUSY MAN, MAXIMUS. WHAT DO YOU *WANT* FROM ME?
I WANT TO GIVE YOU A *GIFT*, COMRADE, THAT MIGHT JUST MAKE YOU THE MOST POWERFUL MAN *ALIVE*.


AND THE COST OF THIS... "GIFT"?
Oh, A MERE PITTANCE. WE'LL CONSIDER IT AN EQUAL TRADE.
AS YOU CAN SEE, I AM CURRENTLY INCARCERATED AGAINST MY WILL REGRETTABLY, I HAVE BEEN USURPED FROM MY...→Huff←RIGHTFUL POSITION AS MONARCH OF ATTILAN.
→Huff←YOU CAN HELP ME GET MY NICE COMFORTABLE CHAIR BACK, YURI, AND I CAN GIVE YOU A TECHNOLOGICAL LEG-UP ON THE COMPETITION SO TO SPEAK.
THESE PAPERS... WHAT ARE THEY?
Mm? Oh, PLANS AND BLUEPRINTS... THAT SORT OF THING. I'M SURE YOU'LL HAVE SOMEONE FIGURE THEM OUT. THESE WERE MY ORIGINAL PLANS FOR THE OUTER PERIMETER DEFENSES.
OF COURSE NO DOUBT KARNAK HAS SEEN FIT TO MODIFY THE WHOLE THING.
Hmm... I HADN'T THOUGHT OF THAT.
EVEN IF I COULD FIND A WAY THROUGH THE PERIMETER DEFENSES, I WOULD GAIN NOTHING FROM IT. THE DOME IS IMPENETRABLE--
THE DOME IS MERELY A DOORWAY, YURI. ALL YOU NEED IS THE KEY.


EXPLAIN.
IT'S A SONIC SOMETHING-OR-OTHER. DON'T ASK ME HOW IT WORKS, BECAUSE I CAN'T REMEMBER.
ACTUALLY, I'M NOT EVEN CERTAIN HOW IT WORKS. I'D ORIGINALLY COOKED IT UP TO COUNTERACT THE EFFECTS OF MY BROTHER'S INCESSANT YAKKING, BUT IT NEVER HAD QUITE ENOUGH "OOMPH."
AH, BUT IT DOES HAVE ONE INTRIGUING SIDE-EFFECT. IT RESONATES IN DISRUPTIVE HARMONY WITH NEGATIVE SPACE.
ALL YOU NEED TO DO IS TURN IT ON UNDER THE DOME, LEAVE IT ALONE FOR A WHILE AND ...BOOM!
THE PROBLEM IS, IT WON'T STAY TURNED ON AFTER IT'S TELEPORTED. OTHERWISE I'D BE ABLE TO DELIVER IT MYSELF. I SUPPOSE THAT'S WHERE YOU COME IN – TO BUILD ANOTHER ONE AND DELIVER IT FOR ME.
SOONER OR LATER, YURI, I'M GOING TO WANT TO WALK OUT OF HERE. AND WHEN I DO, I WANT YOU TO BE WAITING ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE DOOR.
AND HOW WILL I GET THE DEVICE INSIDE THE CITY?
JUST BE YOUR CHARMING SELF, YURI. I'M SURE YOU'LL FIND A WAY.


TELL BLACK BOLT, IN A CLEAR VOICE, WHAT YOU TOLD ME, TONAJA. DON'T WORRY, HE DOESN'T BITE
IT MIGHT BE NOTHING AT ALL, MAJESTY. B-BUT IT'S ABOUT LOCKJAW.
WELL, HE'S BEEN ACTING KIND OF STRANGELY LATELY...
"...THIS MORNING, I TOOK HIM OUT TO THE PALACE GROUNDS, JUST TO KEEP HIM COMPANY, YOU KNOW. BUT... IT WAS JUST LIKE YESTERDAY... HE BEGAN BARKING, AND HE WOULDN'T STOP.
"IT'S LIKE HE COULD SEE SOMETHING. I... I PUT MY HAND ON HIS COAT, JUST TO CALM HIM DOWN, AND THEN...


"...I FELT THIS AWFUL, PERSISTENT *TUGGING*... AS IF I WAS BEING STRETCHED OUT ACROSS A THOUSAND UNIVERSES. I WAS BEING PULLED FROM THE INSIDE OUT...
"...I TRIED TO HOLD ON TO LOCKJAW'S FUR, SMELL HIS BREATH, GROUND MYSELF IN SOME KIND OF REALITY. SO. I OPENED MY EYES... JUST TO SEE IF I COULD ORIENT MYSELF...
"... AND *THAT'S* WHEN I SAW THAT WE WEREN'T *ALONE*!"
WHAT DOES IT *MEAN*, TRITON?
IT MEANS THAT EVERYTHING HAS *CHANGED*, LITTLE CRYSTAL. NO LONGER *SAFE* ARE WE IN OUR HAVEN.


WHAT IS IT, AGENT PEAVEY?
W-WELL, SIR... I THINK WE HAVE A SITUATION OVER HERE.
"IT BEGAN ABOUT THREE MINUTES AGO, JUST OUTSIDE THE PERIMETERS. WHAT YOU SEE IS THE MERCENARY FORCE APPROACHING THE CITY.
"WE THINK WE CAN MAKE OUT HEAVY ARTILLERY, TOO. AND TANKS. ALL HEADED TOWARDS ATTILAN."
WHAT IN HELL'S NAME ARE THEY DOING OUT THERE?
IF WE'RE LUCKY, SIR? EXERCISES.


B-BUT COMMANDER STALYENKO... I MUST URGE CAUTION --
AT TIMES LIKE THESE YOU ARE NOT *PAID* TO URGE *ANYTHING*, JARZINHO -- JUST TO FOLLOW ORDERS.
AT LEAST LET ME HAVE SOME TIME. THESE ARE NOT THE PROPER *CONDITIONS* --
ON THE CONTRARY, THE RAIN IS *PERFECT*. BESIDES, DO YOU WANT TO SPEND THE REST OF YOUR LIFE DIGGING UP FOSSILS?
NO. IT'S JUST... I DON'T *UNDERSTAND*.
I KNOW. THAT IS WHY YOU ARE A GOOD SOLDIER.


COMRADE STALYENKO, LISTEN TO ME... THIS IS SUICIDE.
THESE PEOPLE HAVE TECHNOLOGIES WE CANNOT DREAM OF.
THEY ARE FAR SUPERIOR, BOTH IN WEAPONRY AND DEFENSES.
NOT ANYMORE.
BA-KOOM


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TEXEIRA

The story thus far:

The client had just awakened from a hallucination to find himself kissing his secretary.

In Wakandan culture, that was as good as a proposal.

He'd left his car to go clear his head when two guys stepped out of thin air and rushed to make his acquaintance.

Meanwhile, the Reverend Dr. Michael Ibn al-Hajj Achebe, the new and self-appointed leader of the "transitional government" in Wakanda, was holding his first press conference...

This is a time of great sarraw and great sadness for the Wakandan people. In the interest af peace, and in the absence af the king, I have with great reluctance stepped forward to serve this nation...





...in prayerful hope that I, as neutral arbiter, may prevail upan the parties that a military salutian will nat pravide a satisfactary autcame.

Let us pray...





There is same gaad news ta repart, my brathers. Thaugh much af the Ghudazai resident sub-divisian was destrayed in the fighting....

...rescuers DID manage ta save Muatu here! Thaugh waunded, dactars assure me, Muatu will indeed make a full recavery! See? Things are getting better already!





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STAN LEE PRESENTS
The minute he got a glimpse of his attackers, the client knew the 313 rounds of spent ammunition and multiple bone fractures were just the embossment on the dinner invitation.
He was being SUMMONED By someone he'd known all his LIFE...
...and hoped he'd never see AGAIN.
THE BLACK PANTHER IN
THE PRICE
BY CHRISTOPHER PRIEST AND MARK TEXEIRA
JOE QUESADA STORYTELLING
ALITHA MARTINEZ BACKGROUND ASSISTS
BRIAN HABERLIN COLORS
RICHARDS AND COMICRAFT LETTERS
NANCI DAKESIAN MANAGING EDITOR
QUESADA AND PALMIOTTI EDITORS
BOB HARRAS CHIEF

THE KING'S SON




T'Challa FIRED them right after his installation as king.
The file said T'Chaka's idealistic successor FROWNED on shadow cabinets and secret police.
Guess somebody should have told THOSE guys.
BRRATTATTATT
The Hatut Zeraze used some kind of cloaking device.
A combo plate of Eastern mysticism and Wakandan technology.
Of course, the client had his OWN bag of tricks.
Including multi-phasing VIBRANIUM SOLES on his boots and NIGHT VISION integrated into his mask's lenses.
There, in the DARK, the odds were EVEN.
Well, sort of.
BRRATTATTATT
One CAT to five DOGS...


Dogs with INCENDIARY DEVICES...
BRRATTATTATT
THWOOM
The client used an ENERGY DAGGER.
On its highest setting the dagger could slice up forged steel like it was government CHEESE
Which, all things considered, was pretty good news.
KRAAKKOW


Had the client not been so distracted by his limo lip-lock, the Snoopy Devil Dogg-Dogs would NEVER have gotten that close to him.
And there'd be a lot less GLASS all over Third Avenue...
<WHERE IS YOUR MASTER?!>*
*from Wakandan — Ed.
<I SPEAK NOT, THOUGH I MAY PERISH. O KING.>
<HOW VERY BRAVE -- KNOWING I DO NOT KILL.>
<WHICH WAS WHY I DISMISSED THE HATUT ZERAZE MANY YEARS AGO.>*
*ba-TOO zir-Ah-ze, sic Ed.
YES, BUT YOU NEED US NOW.
MURDERERS, TORTURERS AND ASSASSINS.
LOYALISTS TO THE THRONE, MY LORD KING.
SHOW YOURSELF, HUNTER!
AS YOU COMMAND, MY KING.
THE HATUT ZERAZE LIVE ONLY TO SERVE.
WERE THAT TRUE YOU WOULD NOT BE HERE, HUNTER.
I RESPECTFULLY DISAGREE.
I AM THE WHITE WOLF. I AM OF WAKANDA. AND, LIKE IT OR NOT, LORD KING --
-- YOU NEED ME.


I'VE BEEN... FREELANCING... THESE PAST YEARS SINCE WE LAST SAW ONE ANOTHER.
BUT I'VE ALWAYS KEPT AN EYE ON HOME.
AS, APPARENTLY, HAVE OTHERS...
...AND AFTER A NATIONAL DAY OF MOURNING, I AM PROCLAIMING BISCUIT DAY!
EAT NOTHING BUT BISCUITS FROM DAWN TO DUSK -- AND GET A FREE CAR WASH
LET ME COME HOME, T'CHALLA. YOU NEED ME NOW.
ACHEBE IS A FOOL.
I WILL DEAL WITH HIM BEFORE THE SUN RISES.
ACHEBE IS THE LEAST OF YOUR PROBLEMS.
HE'S JUST A FACE, A MASK FOR THE REAL CONSPIRATORS
PERHAPS, BUT I WILL RULE AS I RULE --
-- WHICH DOES NOT INCLUDE POLITICAL PRISONERS, KIDNAPPING OR ASSASSINATIONS.
I'VE GOT NO APOLOGIES FOR YOU, YOUR FATHER MADE SURE THINGS THAT NEEDED DOING GOT DONE.
IF MY FATHER HAD KNOWN YOUR METHODS --
-- HE'D HAVE DISMISSED YOU HIMSELF.


I'LL STAY OUT OF IT, T'CHALLA, FOR NOW. AFTER ALL, YOU ARE THE KING'S SON.
I AM THE KING.
YES. THAT'S WHAT I MEANT.
I CANNOT ALLOW YOU TO LEAVE, HUNTER.
T'CHALLA -- YOUR BATTLE WITH THE HATUT ZERAZE HAS ALREADY DESTROYED MOST OF A CITY BLOCK.
AND THE WHITE WOLF IS GREATER THAN THE HATUT ZERAZE.
BESIDES -- YOU HAVE MUCH MORE PRESSING CONCERNS.
THERE'S A DEMON WAITING AT YOUR FLAT.
YOUR STATE DEPARTMENT HANDLER'S KEEPING HIM AMUSED.
Oh. AND INCIDENTALLY--
--- HAVE YOU SEEN HER YET --?
--- MISS LYNNE?
DON'T KEEP YOUR DEMONS WAITING, LORD KING...
...AFTER ALL, YOU HAVE SO MANY...

CALLING ALL CARS



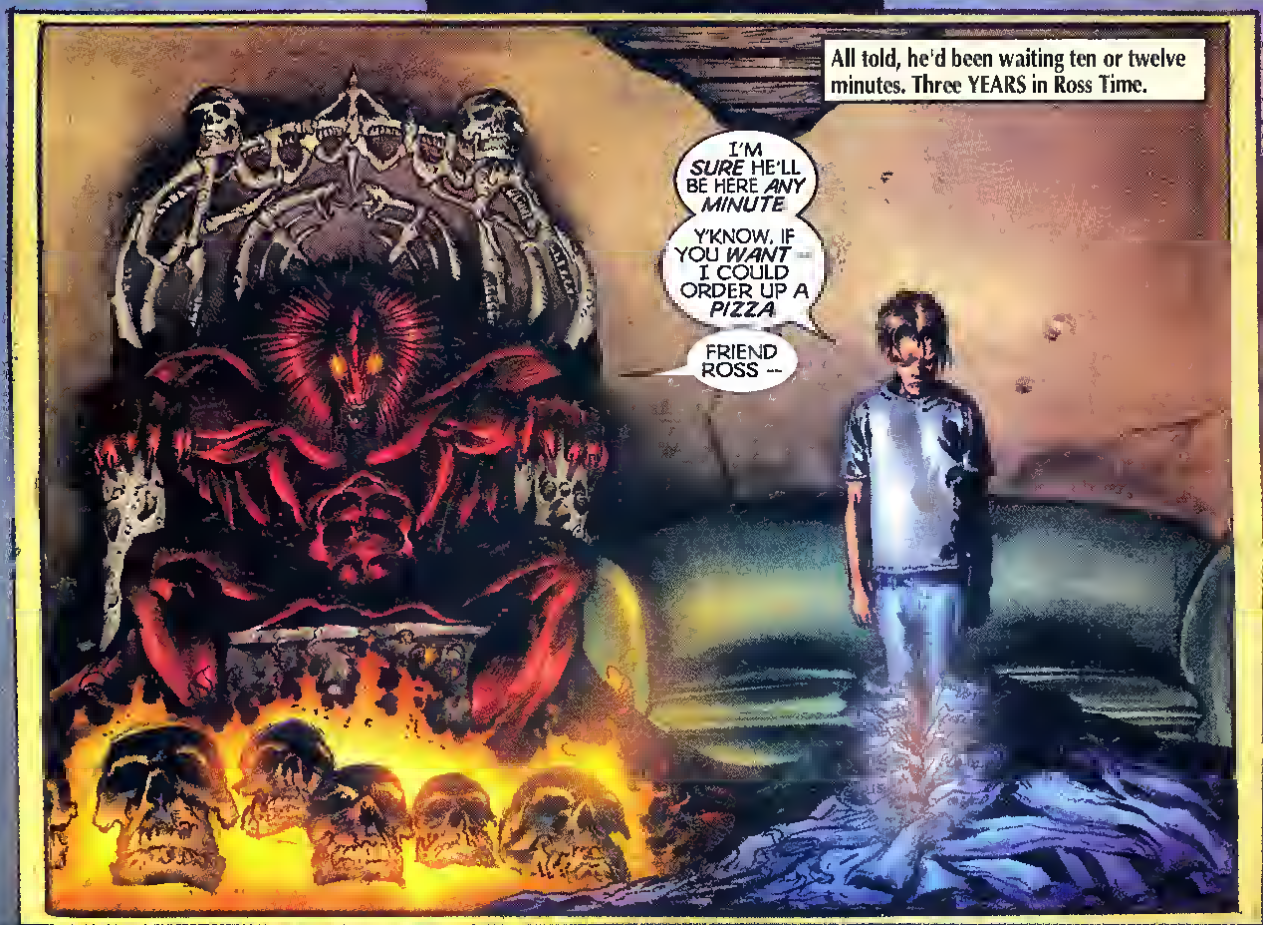

HEE HAW WAS NEVER LIKE THIS
OKAY, ROSS. YOUR REPORT IS STARTING TO MAKE A UTTLE SENSE NOW.
WHICH COULD MEAN I'M JUST GOING CRAZY.
HEY. WHY SHOULD I BE THE ONLY ONE?
SO THE CLIENT CAUGHT THE BAD GUY. DROPPED HIM WITH THAT COP. TORK --
-- AND WAS FREE TO HEAD HOME AND DEAL WITH ACHEBE -- THE CREEP WHO'D STOLEN HIS COUNTRY. THEN WHAT --?!
LEAVE IT FOR THE MORNING, BOSS-LADY. WE'RE OFF DUTY NOW...
WE'RE ALONE... AT YOUR PLACE FOR A CHANGE.. THE LIGHTS ARE LOW...
...THAT CAN MEAN ONLY ONE THING -- IT'S TIME FOR --
--NAKED BANJO--!
ROSS -- YOU'VE TALKED MY EAR OFF ABOUT THIS CASE ALL DAY LONG --
-- DEVILS AND WOLVES AND GHOSTS. WHY STOP NOW?
BECAUSE NOW I'M WEARING THIS LOVELY TWO-PIECE OUTFIT -- SOCKS.
ROSS --
-- WHY ARE YOU SUDDENLY CHOKING ON THIS PART OF THE STORY?
WHAT HAPPENED?

KENNY

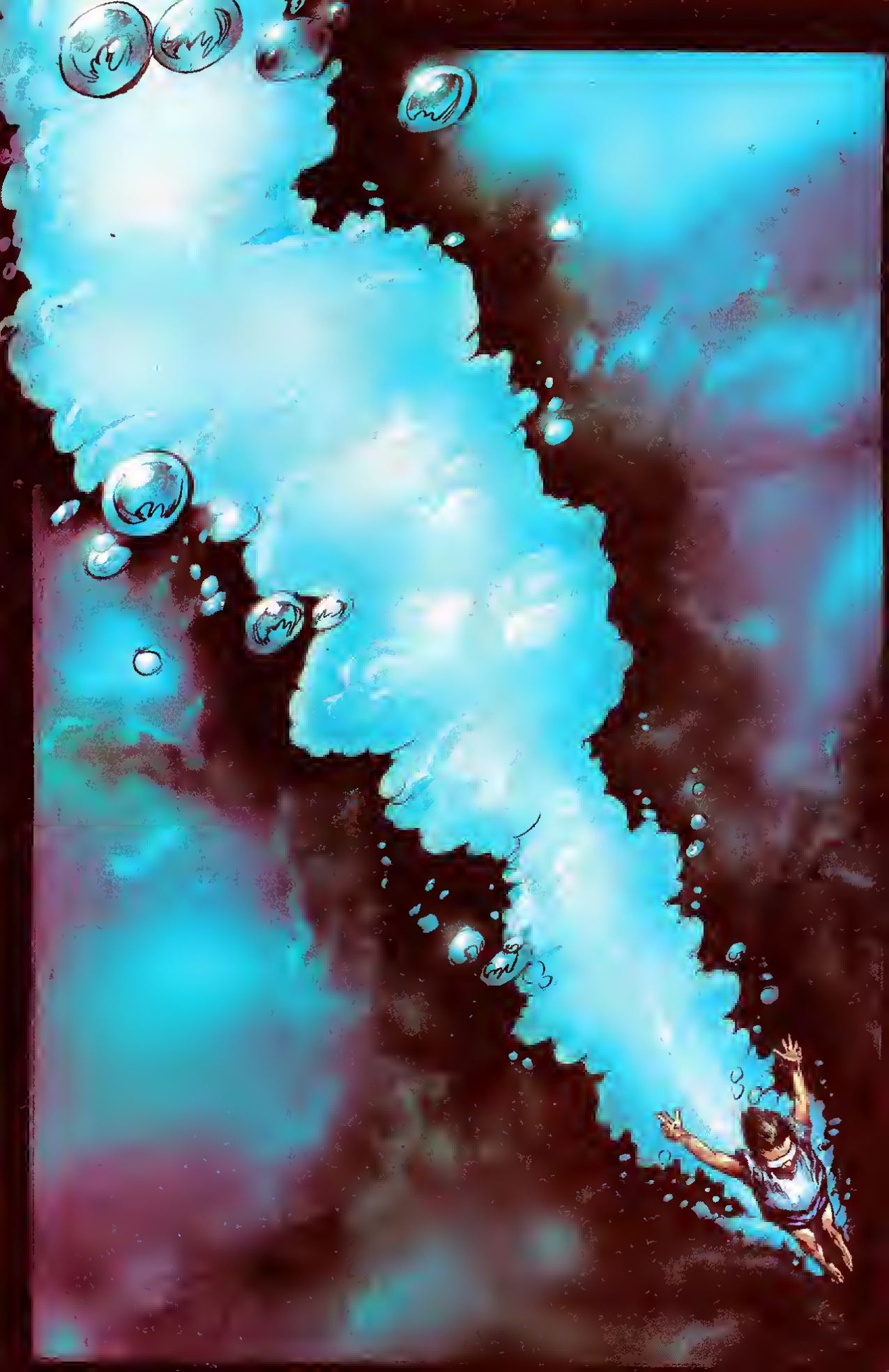

So, it was just us guys, hanging out in a Brooklyn Housing Project. ME --


ZZZZZZZZ
--ZURI, the client's regent and fearsome bodyguard --


-- and the Darkness reaching out for the Darkness.


All told, he'd been waiting ten or twelve minutes. Three YEARS in Ross Time.
I'M SURE HE'LL BE HERE ANY MINUTE.
Y'KNOW, IF YOU WANT -- I COULD ORDER UP A PIZZA.
FRIEND ROSS --


-- WHY DO YOU FEAR ME SO?
Oh... I DUNNO... SEEMED LIKE THE THING TO DO, YOU BEING THE DEVIL AND ALL.
I ONLY LOOK LIKE THE DEVIL.
I HAVE THAT PROBLEM TOO. MAYBE A NEW CREME RINSE...
I'M A COLLECTOR, FRIEND ROSS.
I AM MASTER OF A REALM POPULATED BY ONLY MYSELF --
-- AND THE LOST SOULS WHO WILLINGLY FOLLOW ME.
NOT QUITE THE IDEAL EXISTENCE...
WELL, WHY NOT JUST, Ah, LEAVE?
LEAVE?
LEAVE. SCRAM. VAMOOSE. CHANGE PARTY AFFILIATION. JOIN A BAND...
...PLAY BASS FOR MARILYN MANSON...
I AND MY REALM ARE ONE.
I CANNOT LEAVE, AND THE LONGER I REMAIN IN THIS WORLD, THE WEAKER MY POWER.
SO WHY COME HERE? WHY KEEP REACHING FOR MORE SOULS?
IT IS HUNGER... AN OBSESSION...
YEAH... LIKE ME AND DVD'S...
THE PURER -- THE MORE NOBLE THE SOUL, THE BETTER.
HEY. I WORK IN WASHINGTON.
WHICH IS WHY YOU NEED NOT FEAR ME...
...KENNY.




GO! GO!
FASTER!
HEY -- WHERE'S KENNY?!
CRIPES, KENNY -- YOU STINK.
FAT BOY SWIMS LIKE A BRICK.
KENNY, YOU LOSER.

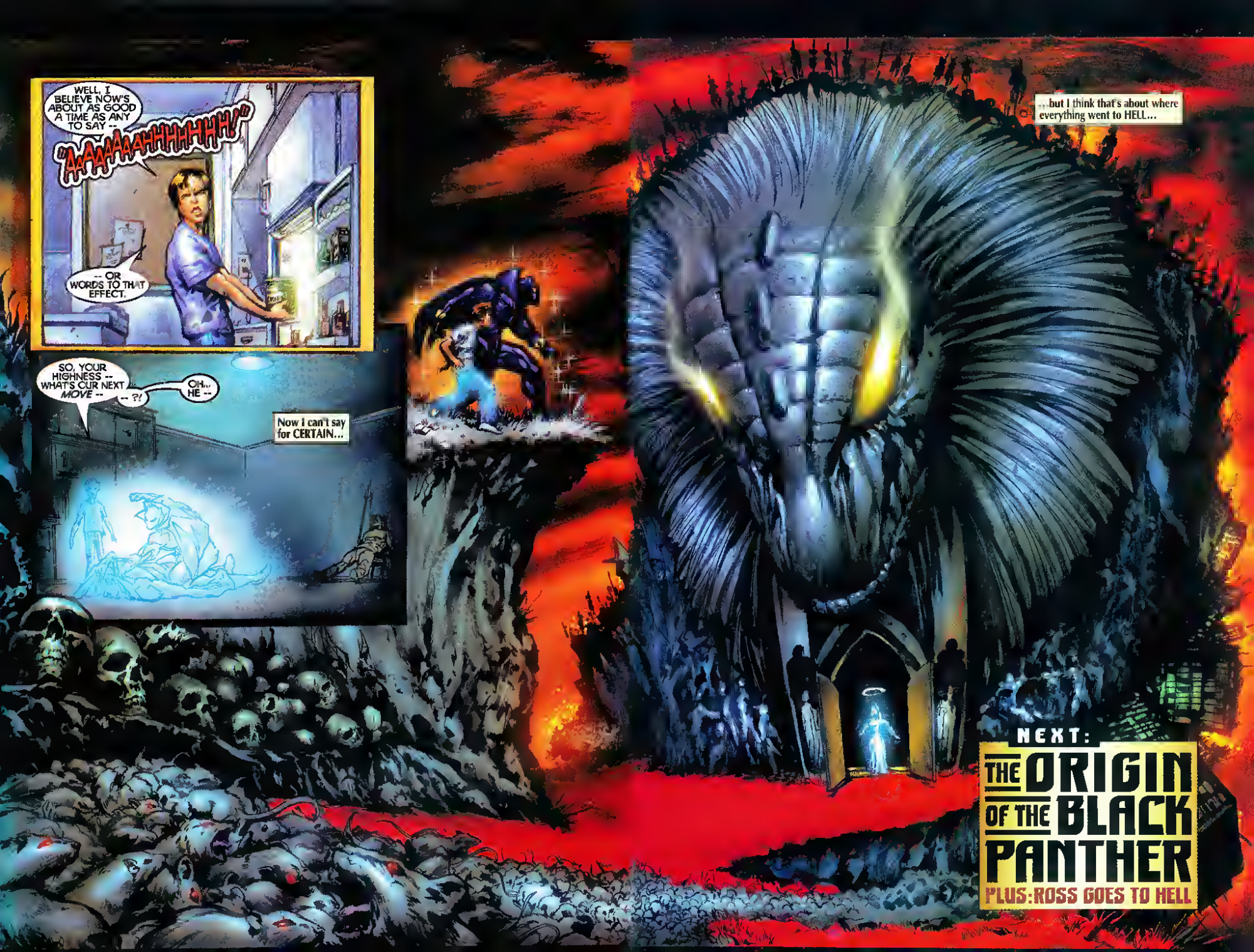

KENNY, GET IN THERE AND WASH THOSE DISHES.
YES, MA.
TV GUIDE
DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU DERN KIDS IS *THINKIN'* THESE DAYS --
-- SPEND ALL GAT-DERN DAY AT THE GAT-DERN *LAKE*. WHEN I WAS A CHILE, WE HAD *RULES*, KENNY.
YES, MA.
AND GET IN THE *BACK* AND SCOOP OUT THAT POO. GAT-DERN DOG *WENT* AGAIN.
YES, MA.
ROSS...
NOBODY'S.. CALLED ME "KENNY".. IN YEARS...
YES. SINCE YOU DROVE AWAY 12 YEARS AGO TUESDAY. 6:47 PM. YOU WORE A BLUE HAT.
YOU READ MY MIND...
NO. I CAN'T DO THAT.


SLAM
I WAS THERE.
I KNOW WHAT YOU'VE BEEN THROUGH, FRIEND ROSS. DO NOT FEAR ME.
--
-- WELL, I GUESS... MAYBE YOU'RE NOT... NOT SO --
KILL KILL HIM! HIM!
YOU WANT ME TO CALL THE AVENGERS?!
WHY?
WHY? WHY?!
ARE YOU SEEING WHAT I'M SEEING --?
BAAPP


-- ?!
YOU *HAVE* TO BE *KIDDING ME*...
HE *DECKED* HIM?
HE DECKED HIM.
I SPENT FIFTEEN MINUTES *WETTING MYSELF* OVER THAT GUY, AND THE PANTHER CLOCKS HIM WITH *ONE PUNCH.*
...DECKED HIM...
YEAH, JUST KEEP SAYING IT, NIKKI. MY PRIVATES COULDN'T *GET* ANY *SMALLER* AT THIS POINT.
BUT... *HOW* --?
I WONDERED THAT *MYSELF*. REMEMBER *THOSE GUYS* --
-- the huge ENTOURAGE the client brought with him?
...AH...
AFRICAN AIR


-- well, who knew, but most of them were tech types, some of the most brilliant minds in Wakanda. Panther's entourage had taken over two abandoned floors in the housing project. They'd been MONITORING Mephisto. They already KNEW he drew his power from whatever dimension he came from, and they had an idea how to cut the circuit.
See, whether MYSTIC or SCIENTIFIC, Mephisto's powers -- like everyone else's -- depend on a certain set of constants, like gravity, atmosphere and molecular cohesion. Change ANY of those constants, and the magic isn't quite so magic anymore.
Defeating Mephisto was a simple matter of changing the molecular constant of tbe universe, which was accomplished simply enough --
-- by placing a personal FORCE FIELD around Mephisto, and remodulating the field thirty times a second.
MAYBE that bought the client eight seconds of confusion.
He only needed THREE.
SSPLUGGSSHH


OH GOD, OH GOD, OH GOD, OH GOD. I HATE THIS JOB!
LISTEN TO ME CAREFULLY, DEVIL --
-- YOU ARE DYING.
SO LONG AS A PART OF YOU REMAINS BOUND TO THE EARTH, YOUR POWER REMAINS DIMINISHED.
YOU HAVE ONE CHANCE TO SAVE YOURSELF --
TELL ME OF MY PEOPLE. TELL ME OF ACHEBE.
SO MANY QUESTIONS, MY LORD.
WHEN IT IS YOU WHO HAVE ALL THE ANSWERS...
...IF YOU HAVE THE WILL TO FIND THEM.
ACHEBE SOLD HIS SOUL TO YOU -- AND YOU EMPOWERED HIM TO TAKE OVER WAKANDA --!
PICKLES
YOU ARE ONLY HALF-RIGHT, KING. ACHEBE IS MY SERVANT, TRUE --
-- BUT I DIDN'T GIVE HIM WAKANDA --
-- YOU DID. STILL, YOU ONLY HAVE TO WISH IT --
-- AND I WILL DELIVER ACHEBE TO YOUR JUSTICE.
IN MOMENTS YOU WILL BE DEAD AND WAKANDA FREE.
A LOT CAN HAPPEN IN A MOMENT, LORD KING...


WELL, I BELIEVE NOW'S ABOUT AS GOOD A TIME AS ANY TO SAY --
"AAAAAAAAHHHHHHH!"
-- OR WORDS TO THAT EFFECT.
SO, YOUR HIGHNESS -- WHAT'S OUR NEXT MOVE --
-- ?!
OH... HE --
Now I can't say for CERTAIN...
...but I think that's about where everything went to HELL...
NEXT:
THE ORIGIN OF THE BLACK PANTHER
PLUS: ROSS GOES TO HELL


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MA GNUCCI HAS AN ARMY AROUND HER.
BEFORE I GO FOR HER I WANT TO THIN THEM OUT SOME. GIVE MYSELF A CLEARER RUN.
SO I DRIVE TO A WISEGUY BAR IN BROOKLYN AND PUT MOST OF A BELT OF SEVEN-SIX-TWO THROUGH THE LINE OF CADDIES PARKED OUTSIDE.
THE PLACE EXPLODES WITH GNUCCI SOLDIERS.
THE FIRST FIVE OUT THE DOOR GET WHAT'S LEFT IN THE BELT.
THAT SEEMS TO DO THE TRICK.
HE'S STOPPIN'!
COME ON, YOU ANIMALS! COME AN' GET IT!
YOU DIRTY SON OF A --



THE DEVIL BY THE HORNS

GARTH ENNIS STORY STEVE DILLON PENCILS JIMMY PALMIOTTI INKS
CHRIS SOTOMAYOR COLORS RICHARD STARKINGS & COMICRAFT'S WES ABBOTT LETTERS
JOE QUESADA & JIMMY PALMIOTTI EDITORS NANCI DAKESIAN MANAGING EDITOR BOB HARRAS CHIEF

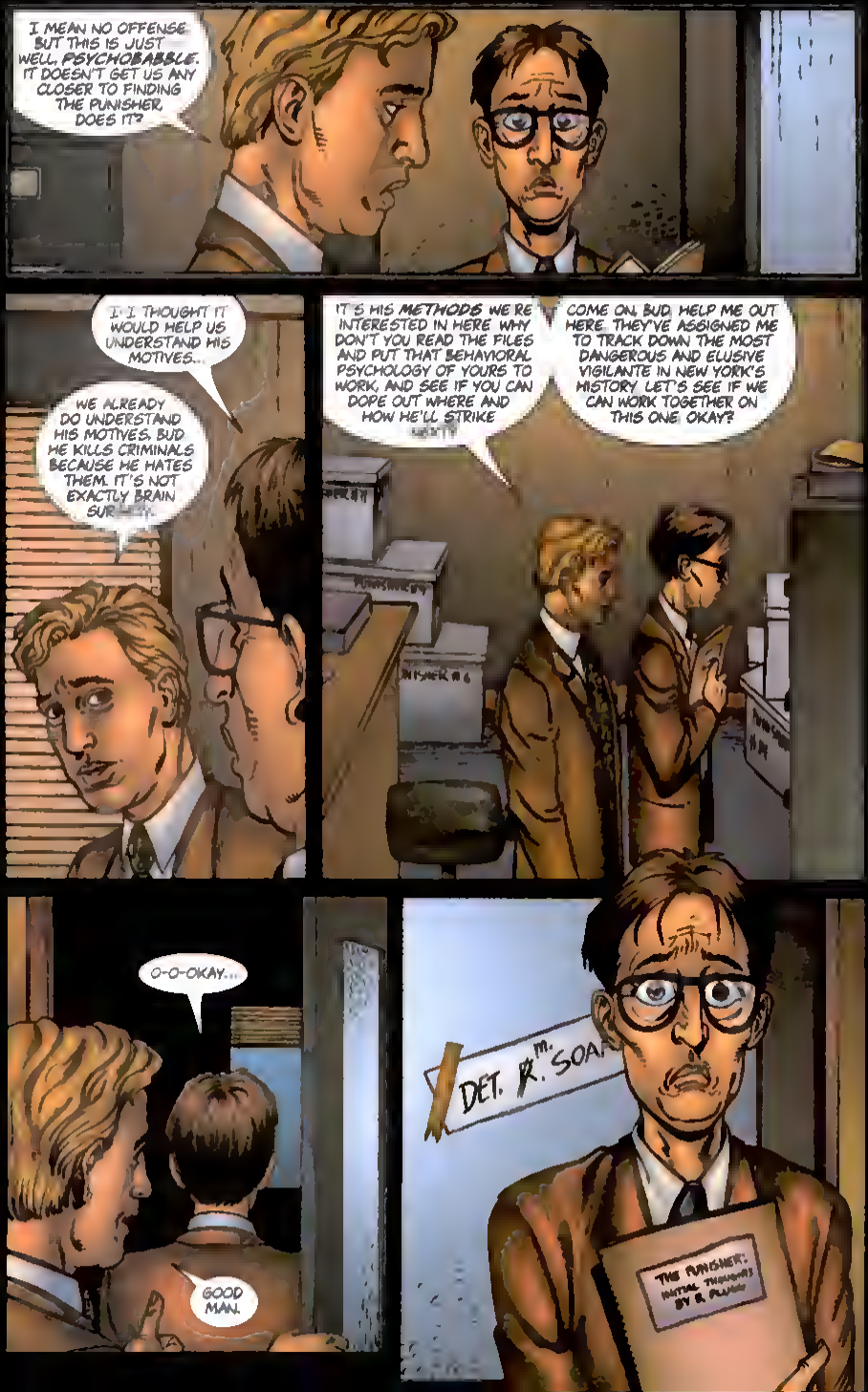
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EEIIIGHH!
NOOOOO!
HOLY GOD --!
JOHNNY --
OH NO -- OH LORD --
KIIIIIIII MMEEEEEE...
FLAMETHROWER'S LOUSY FOR A PROLONGED FIREFIGHT. SOONER OR LATER THE TANKS'LL TAKE A BULLET.
BUT I PLANNED AHEAD.


THERE! THERE!
THAT DIRTY EVIL PIECE A GARBAGE! THAT ANIMAL!
JOHNNY AN' JOEY, BIG TONY, BURNED UP LIKE THEY WERE NOTHIN —
LET'S GET HIM!
INNA ELEVATOR! HEADIN FOR THE BASEMENT!
STAIRS!
YES! BEAT YOU TO IT, SCUMBALL!
OKAY, LINE UP! INSTANT THE DOOR OPENS WE PERFORATE THIS CREEP!
YOU ARE DEAD, PUNISHER!


OH NO.
HELPFUL
COOPERATIVE
STUPID
THAT'S MY BOYS


"THE PUNISHER. INITIAL THOUGHTS BY B. PUGG"...
DET. ★M. SOAP
"THE PUNISHER IS OBVIOUSLY LESS A MAN THAN A FORCE OF NATURE
"HAVING LEFT HIS OWN HUMANITY BEHIND LONG AGO, HE HAS BECOME A SYMBOL AS STARK AS THE ONE HE WEARS ON HIS UNIFORM
"A SPECTRE OF VENGEANCE MOVING LIKE A VIRUS WITHIN THE CRIMINAL PSYCHE, HE FULFILLS SOME PRIMEVAL NEED WITHIN SOCIETY TO JUDGE AND PUNISH ITS WORST TRANSGRESSORS AND..."
BLAH-BLAH "ZEITGEIST", BLAH-BLAH... "MICROCOSM TO EVOKE THE MACROCOSM" YADDA-YADDA. HMM. RIGHT... "TURN AWAY FROM THE LIGHT AND STEP INTO THE DARKNESS", DUH-DAH-DUH-DAH-DUH-DAH... OH, HOLD ON, WHERE AM I -- AH.
"IN CONCLUSION, HE IS THE BLACKEST NIGHT AT THE HEART OF THE AMERICAN SOUL. HE IS AN AVENGING ARCHANGEL, THE TERRIFYING EMBODIMENT OF THE SECOND AMENDMENT, COME BACK TO HAUNT US ALL."
#24
DON'T TAKE THIS THE WRONG WAY, BUD --
BUT WHAT DOES ALL THIS ACTUALLY MEAN?


I MEAN NO OFFENSE BUT THIS IS JUST WELL, PSYCHOBABBLE. IT DOESN'T GET US ANY CLOSER TO FINDING THE PUNISHER, DOES IT?
I-I THOUGHT IT WOULD HELP US UNDERSTAND HIS MOTIVES...
WE ALREADY DO UNDERSTAND HIS MOTIVES. BUD HE KILLS CRIMINALS BECAUSE HE HATES THEM. IT'S NOT EXACTLY BRAIN SURGERY.
IT'S HIS METHODS WE'RE INTERESTED IN HERE. WHY DON'T YOU READ THE FILES AND PUT THAT BEHAVIORAL PSYCHOLOGY OF YOURS TO WORK, AND SEE IF YOU CAN DOPE OUT WHERE AND HOW HE'LL STRIKE NEXT?
COME ON, BUD. HELP ME OUT HERE. THEY'VE ASSIGNED ME TO TRACK DOWN THE MOST DANGEROUS AND ELUSIVE VIGILANTE IN NEW YORK'S HISTORY. LET'S SEE IF WE CAN WORK TOGETHER ON THIS ONE, OKAY?
O-O-OKAY...
GOOD MAN.
DET. R. SOA
THE PUNISHER: INITIAL THOUGHTS BY R. PULVER


FATHER REDONDO?
WHA --?
M-M-MRS. PEARSE --!
HOW'RE YEH THIS MORNIN', FATHER? ARE YEH WELL?
I D-DIDN'T THINK YOU CAME TO CLEAN THE CHURCH 'TIL T-TUESDAY!
WHAT?
I SAID I DIDN'T THINK YOU --
WHAT?!
ME HEARIN'S NOT WHAT IT WAS, FATHER. OH, HAVE YEH SPILLED THE CO[illegible] WINE?


I-I --
IS IT THE WINE, FATHER? ONLY ME EYESIGHT S NOT WHAT IT WAS, YEH KNOW?
WELL, WHATEVER IT IS, I'LL SOON CLEAN IT UP FOR YEH. TUESDAY'S CLEANIN' DAY, SO IT IS
BUT TODAY'S FRIDAY, MRS. PEARSE!
WHAT?
TODAY'S FRIDAY! TODAY IS FRIDAY!
WHAT?!
OH IS THIS WEDNESDAY IS IT? WELL, SURE ME MEMORY'S NOT WHAT IT WAS...
WHAT'S THAT YEH'VE GOT THERE, FATHER? IS IT A TURKEY, IS IT?
SURE THANKSGIVING'S NOT FOR MONTHS, FATHER! EVEN I KNOW THAT!
WELL, I CAN'T STAND HERE BLATHERIN' NOT WHEN THERE'S WORK TO BE DONE! HAVE YEH SEEN WHERE I LEFT ME MOP FATHER? HAVE YEH?


BY NOW MA GAUCCI IS CLIMBING THE WALLS.
JUST ONE MORE THING TO TAKE CARE OF.
HER PIT-BULL BROTHER DINO STANDS TRIAL FOR HIS LIFE TOMORROW MULTIPLE HOMICIDE
WHICH JUST FOR ONCE HE DIDN'T
MR. SMITH, DUDE! CHECK THIS OUT!
THAT'S SOMETHING, DAVE.
SPACKER DAVE!
DINO DIDN'T DO IT. SO --
THAT NEW ONE IS PLATE STEEL, MR. BUMPO. YOU BREAK IT AN' I DUNNO WHAT WE'RE GONNA DO...
DO THEY COME IN ADAMANTIUM?


THE THING WITH DINO --
DID YOU LIKE THE COOKIES?
YES, JOAN. I LIKED THE COOKIES.
DINO GNUCCI CAUSES SO MUCH CARNAGE THAT THE D.A. AND THE OTHER FAMILIES ARE TEAMING UP TO PUT HIM IN THE FRAME.
BUNCH OF YAHOS OUT IN CONEY FIND THEIR WAY OFF THE PLANET. EIGHT MEN DEAD IN A POOL HALL. IT'S GOT DINO WRITTEN ALL OVER IT.
EXCEPT IT WASN'T HIM.
WHICH I COULD GIVE A DAMN ABOUT EXCEPT MA GOT HIM THE SLICKEST PAIR OF SHYSTERS IN THE CITY.
THOSE DO-GOODERS CARE SO MUCH ABOUT THE LETTER OF THE LAW THEY TOOK THE CASE. THEY'LL GET HIM OFF.
AND IF I KILL MA GNUCCI DINO WILL BATHE NEW YORK IN BLOOD.
SO DINO FREE I DO NOT WANT.
THE PROBLEM -- THE REAL PROBLEM -- IS MATT MURDOCK.
GNUCCI FAMILY HIRE NELSON AND MURDOCK
AND THE GUARDIAN ANGEL THAT FOLLOWS HIM EVERYWHERE.


OKAY, BUD, THEY JUST FAXED THROUGH THE AUTOPSY REPORT ON CARLO GNUCCI...
I DON'T KNOW THAT THERE'S ANYTHING WE CAN USE, REALLY, IT'S ALL PRETTY MUCH WHAT YOU'D EXPECT. WANT TO TAKE A LOOK AND SEE IF THERE'S ANYTHING I MISSED?
BUD?


FIRST NIGHT OF THE TRIAL MURDOCK SPENT THE DAY MAKING MINCEMEAT OF THE PROSECUTION.
DINO GUCCI'S ON HIS WAY BACK TO JAIL THE UNMARKED CAR THEY'VE GOT HIM IN ARRIVES IN SEVEN MINUTES HE DIES TEN SECONDS LATER
WITH THE SUPPRESSOR ON THE RIFLE AND THE RANGE -- SIX HUNDRED METERS GIVE OR TAKE -- IT SHOULD BE ALL NIGHT BEFORE THEY THINK OF LOOKING HERE
WHICH IS GOOD
TOK
I'M GOING TO NEED EVERY SECOND
FAP
LOSE THE GUN AND RAISE YOUR HANDS BEFORE I BEAT YOU TO A PULP


DON'T YOU EVER STOP?
DINO GNUCCI IS A MONSTER BUT WHEN HE FALLS IT'LL BE ACCORDING TO THE LAW. NOT IN MOCKERY OF IT AND NOT SHOT DOWN IN THE STREET LIKE A DOG
DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND THAT? CAN'T YOU CHOOSE NOT TO KILL, JUST FOR ONCE?
CAN BARELY HEAR HIM.
DOESN'T MATTER
IF YOU COULD JUST SEE THAT YOU HAVE A CHOICE --
I KNOW THESE SPEECHES OF YOURS BY HEART.
BUT --
HIT ME.


I'M LETTING HIM HAVE THE FIRST ROUND BECAUSE HE'S IN FOR A BAD NIGHT
HE'S NOT THE ENEMY HE DOESN'T DESERVE TO BE DESTROYED
GIVING HIM THE ROUND IS EASY
I HAVEN'T GOT A CHANCE AGAINST HIM
NEVER DO


THAT'S THAT.
HE'S NOT THE ENEMY BUT I'M SICK OF HIS SELF-RIGHTEOUS GARBAGE AND HE DESERVES A WAKE-UP CALL --
I RIGGED THE ULTRASONIC AN HOUR AGO. WORKS LIKE SILENT WHISTLES DO ON DOGS
EVERY POOCH IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD STARTS HOWLING EVEN WITH THE EARPLUGS I FEEL LIKE PUKING MY GUTS UP
WHAT IT DOES TO THOSE SENSES OF HIS --
-- I CAN'T BEGIN TO IMAGINE.
SO I MAKE IT AS QUICK AS I CAN.


WHA...?
WHAT IS THIS?!
ONE BULLET. ONE SHOT.
ONE CHANCE TO STOP ME KILLING DINO GNUCCI.
IT'S TIME FOR THAT CHOICE YOU WERE TELLING ME ABOUT.


YOU CAN'T BREAK LOOSE IN TIME. YOU HAVEN'T THE SPACE TO THROW THE GUN MAYBE KNOCK ME OFF MY AIM.
I'VE GOT MY BACK TO YOU I'M WEARING KEVLAR IT'S GOT TO BE A HEADSHOT.
NOW WAIT A MINUTE --
IF YOU DON'T SHOOT YOU'VE GOT A DEATH ON YOUR CONSCIENCE. A DEATH YOU COULD HAVE PREVENTED.
IF YOU DO SHOOT, YOU'RE A KILLER.
WHAT KIND OF A CHOICE IS THAT...?
THE ONE I MAKE EVERY TIME I PULL THE TRIGGER
THE ONE I'M MAKING NOW.
NO!

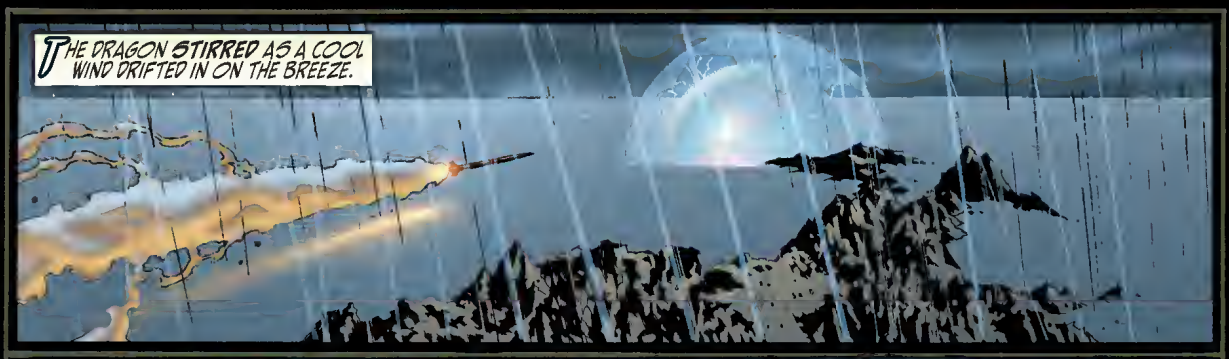

YOU HAVE TO BE OUT OF YOUR MIND! I'M NOT GOING TO KILL YOU!
THEN DINO GNUCCI'S A DEAD MAN.
NO! NOBODY HAS TO DIE! YOU DON'T HAVE TO DO THIS!
DINO GNUCCI DESERVES TO BE TAKEN OFF THE STREETS, BUT LEGITIMATELY! FOR SOMETHING HE'S ACTUALLY DONE! AND IT HAS TO BE THAT WAY OR ELSE EVERYTHING, THESE LAWS WE HAVE, THE SOCIETY WE'VE BUILT IS ALL COMPLETELY WORTHLESS!
FOR CRYING OUT LOUD, MAN, DON'T YOU SEE THAT? DON'T YOU SEE?
THE THOUGHT OF DINO GNUCCI LIVING ONE MORE MINUTE IS ENOUGH TO DRIVE ME INSANE
DON'T YOU SEE?
OH MY GOD.
KA CHAK
THAT'S THE SPIRIT.

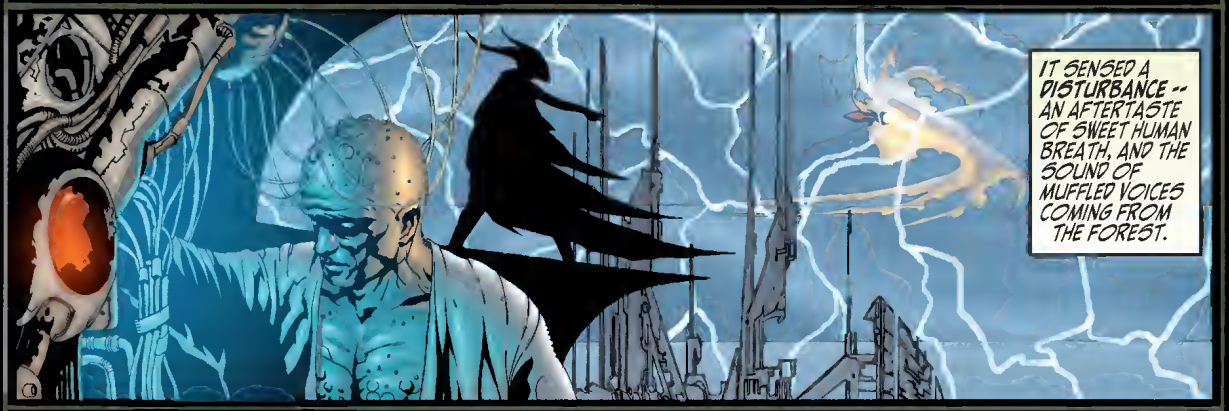

HERE'S THE CAR.
DON'T.
DON'T DO THIS.
FRANK.
I CAN'T LET YOU KILL HIM. YOU KNOW I CAN'T. DON'T PUT ME IN THIS POSITION.
THEY'RE BRINGING HIM OUT.
CASTLE! LISTEN TO ME!
STOP THIS NOW WHILE YOU STILL CAN! CASTLE! LISTEN! LISTEN TO ME. WILL YOU?
I CAN'T LET YOU DO THIS!
PEACH OF A SHOT.
CASTLE!
...GOD FORGIVE ME.
KLIK

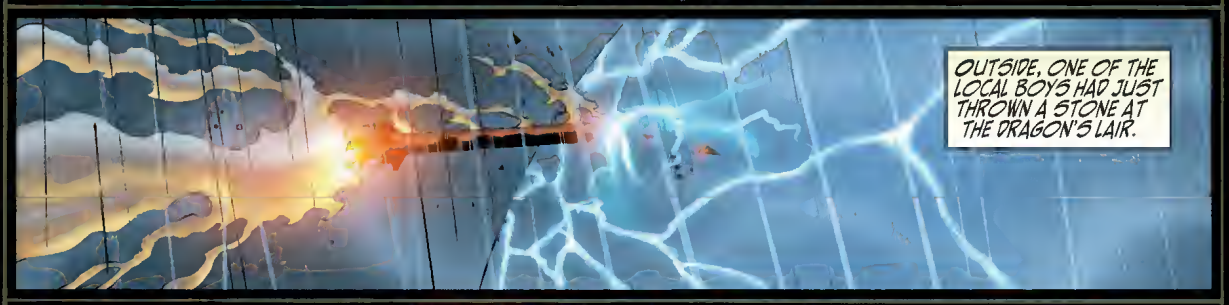

NO FIRING PIN.
YOU CAN LEAVE THE KILLING TO ME.
THE CHAINS'LL BE GONE WHEN YOU WAKE UP.
MMH...?


...FORGIVE ME, LORD, FOR THESE MOST TERRIBLE ACTS...
FORGIVE ME FOR WHAT I DID TO THOSE YOUNG MEN, LORD. FOR DARING TO JUDGE THEM, WHEN IT IS GIVEN ONLY UNTO YOU TO WEIGH THE GOOD AND EVIL IN THEIR SOULS. FORGIVE ME FOR -- FOR THEIR
LORD FORGIVE ME FOR TAKING ADVANTAGE OF POOR MRS. PEARSE'S INFIRMITY, AND MAKING HER AN UNWITTING ACCESSORY... HELP ME, LORD TO OVERCOME THESE RED MISTS THAT KEEP DESCENDING TO CLOUD MY MIND...
AND PLEASE LORD, FORGIVE ME FOR MY PRESUMPTION AND PRIDE IN TAKING ON THE NAME O...
YO-YO-YO WASSUP, FATHA? YOU WANNA HURRY IT UP A LITTLE? I GOT SOME REAL BAD SINS I WANNA BE CONFESSIN', KNOWUMSAYIN'?
OF COURSE, MY SON. FOR I AM THE HOLY...
TO BE CONTINUED...

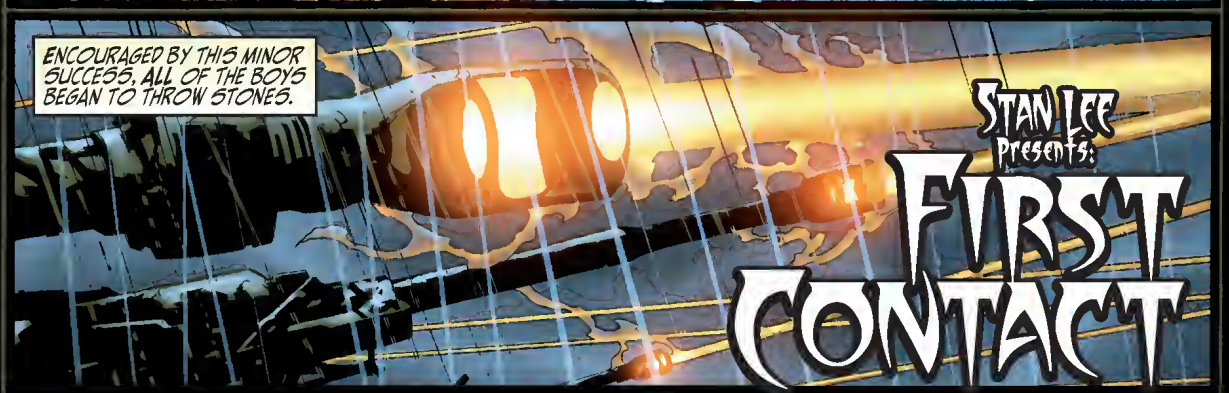

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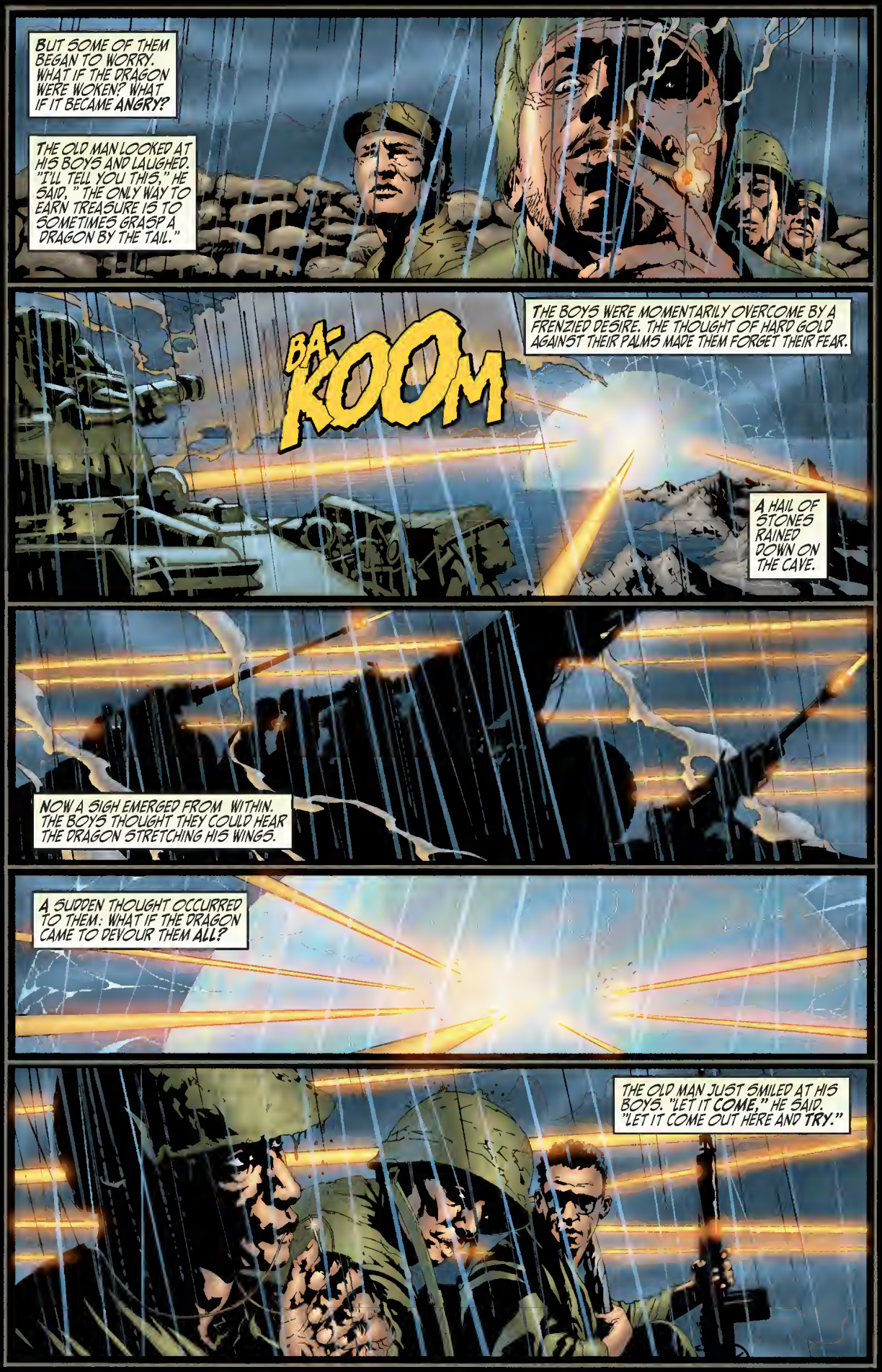


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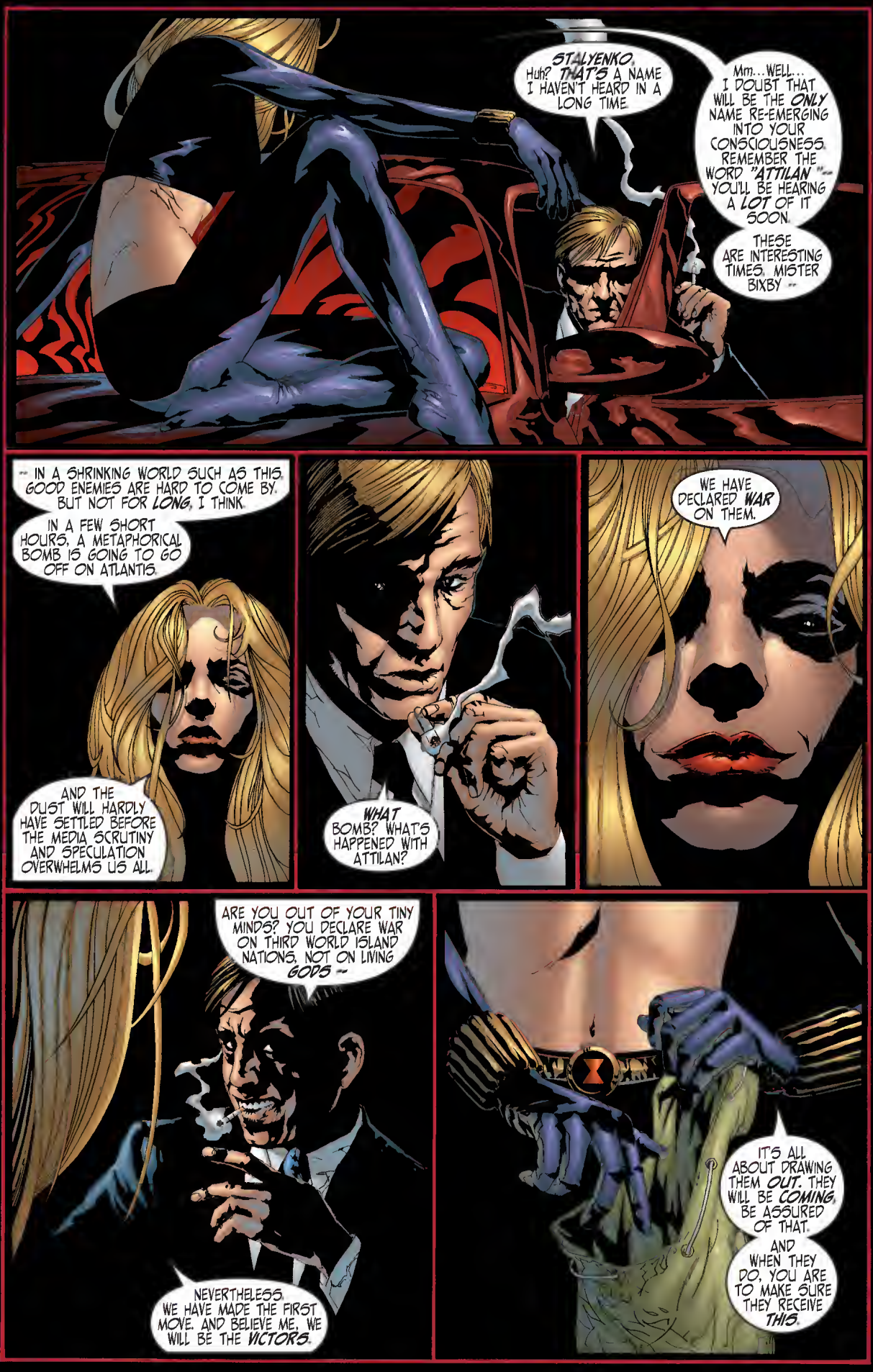
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BUT SOME OF THEM BEGAN TO WORRY. WHAT IF THE DRAGON WERE WOKEN? WHAT IF IT BECAME ANGRY?
THE OLD MAN LOOKED AT HIS BOYS AND LAUGHED. "I'LL TELL YOU THIS," HE SAID, "THE ONLY WAY TO EARN TREASURE IS TO SOMETIMES GRASP A DRAGON BY THE TAIL."
BA-KOOM
THE BOYS WERE MOMENTARILY OVERCOME BY A FRENZIED DESIRE. THE THOUGHT OF HARD GOLD AGAINST THEIR PALMS MADE THEM FORGET THEIR FEAR.
A HAIL OF STONES RAINED DOWN ON THE CAVE.
NOW A SIGH EMERGED FROM WITHIN. THE BOYS THOUGHT THEY COULD HEAR THE DRAGON STRETCHING HIS WINGS.
A SUDDEN THOUGHT OCCURRED TO THEM: WHAT IF THE DRAGON CAME TO DEVOUR THEM ALL?
THE OLD MAN JUST SMILED AT HIS BOYS. "LET IT COME," HE SAID. "LET IT COME OUT HERE AND TRY."


THEY'VE DONE WHAT?
THE HUMANS, NAHREES... THE OUTSIDERS...
...THEY'VE ATTACKED AT THE PERIMETER. EVERYONE'S GOING CRAZY. THEY CALLED TONAJA UP TO THE ARMORY -
WHAT FOR, DINU?
KING BLACK BOLT... ALL OF THE ROYAL FAMILY...
...THEY'RE PREPARING TO GO OUTSIDE AND FACE THE HUMANS!
THEY'RE TAKING AN ESCORT OF FLYERS WITH THEM!
INSANITY, THAT'S WHAT IT IS. SHEER INSANITY! I WON'T STAND FOR IT!
BY RANDAC, WHAT IN THE NAME OF EVOLUTION DO THE STUPID CREATURES THINK THEY'RE DOING?
GETTING OUR ATTENTION, COUSIN GORGON.
AND I THINK THEY'RE MAKING RATHER A GOOD JOB OF IT, DON'T YOU?


BUT TO WHAT *END*, LADY MEDUSA? THE OUTER PALISADE IS FED BY A TRILLION VOLTS AT EACH INTERSECTION. THEIR PRIMITIVE CANNON SHELLS ARE EVAPORATED BEFORE THEY EVEN MAKE *CONTACT*.
IT WOULD BE LIKE FLEAS ATTACKING AN ELEPHANT: POINTLESS AT WORST, IRRITATING AT *BEST* --
=Uhm=
S-SOMETHING HAS OCCURRED TO ME ABOUT THE *TIMING* OF THIS ATTACK, MAJESTY.
I...I THINK THE HUMANS MAY HAVE DISCOVERED A *WEAKNESS*.


NIGHT, MISTER BIXBY.
Mm.
STAY THERE.
HAVE WE MET?
NO, MISTER BIXBY. I AM ORDERED HERE BY MY SUPERIOR COLONEL YURI STALYENKO, TO DELIVER SOMETHING OF UTMOST IMPORTANCE TO YOU.

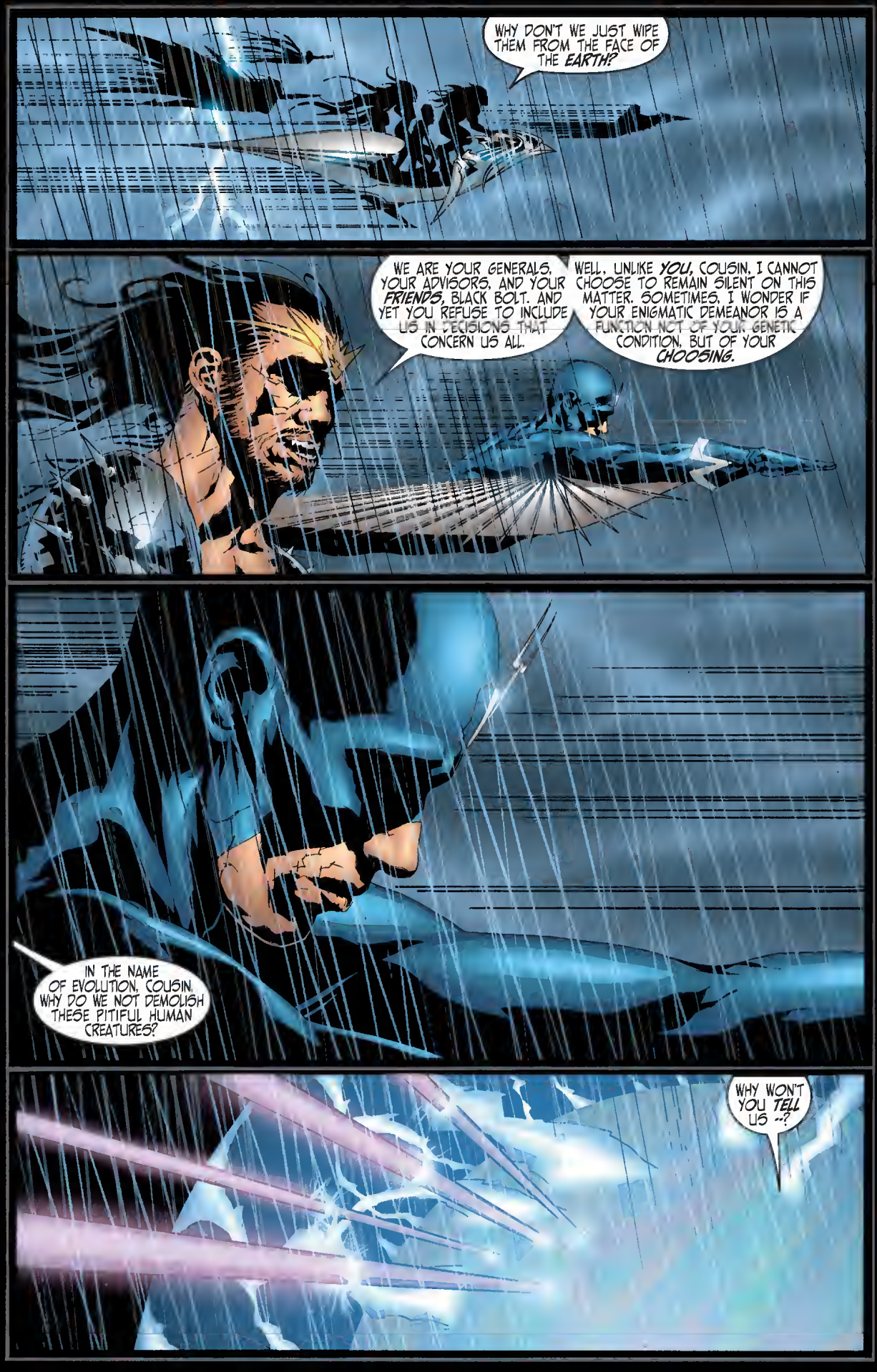

STALYENKO. Huh? THAT'S A NAME I HAVEN'T HEARD IN A LONG TIME
Mm...WELL... I DOUBT THAT WILL BE THE ONLY NAME RE-EMERGING INTO YOUR CONSCIOUSNESS. REMEMBER THE WORD "ATTILAN"... YOU'LL BE HEARING A LOT OF IT SOON.
THESE ARE INTERESTING TIMES, MISTER BIXBY --
-- IN A SHRINKING WORLD SUCH AS THIS, GOOD ENEMIES ARE HARD TO COME BY. BUT NOT FOR LONG, I THINK.
IN A FEW SHORT HOURS, A METAPHORICAL BOMB IS GOING TO GO OFF ON ATLANTIS.
AND THE DUST WILL HARDLY HAVE SETTLED BEFORE THE MEDIA SCRUTINY AND SPECULATION OVERWHELMS US ALL.
WHAT BOMB? WHAT'S HAPPENED WITH ATTILAN?
WE HAVE DECLARED WAR ON THEM.
ARE YOU OUT OF YOUR TINY MINDS? YOU DECLARE WAR ON THIRD WORLD ISLAND NATIONS, NOT ON LIVING GODS --
NEVERTHELESS, WE HAVE MADE THE FIRST MOVE. AND BELIEVE ME, WE WILL BE THE VICTORS.
IT'S ALL ABOUT DRAWING THEM OUT. THEY WILL BE COMING, BE ASSURED OF THAT.
AND WHEN THEY DO, YOU ARE TO MAKE SURE THEY RECEIVE THIS.

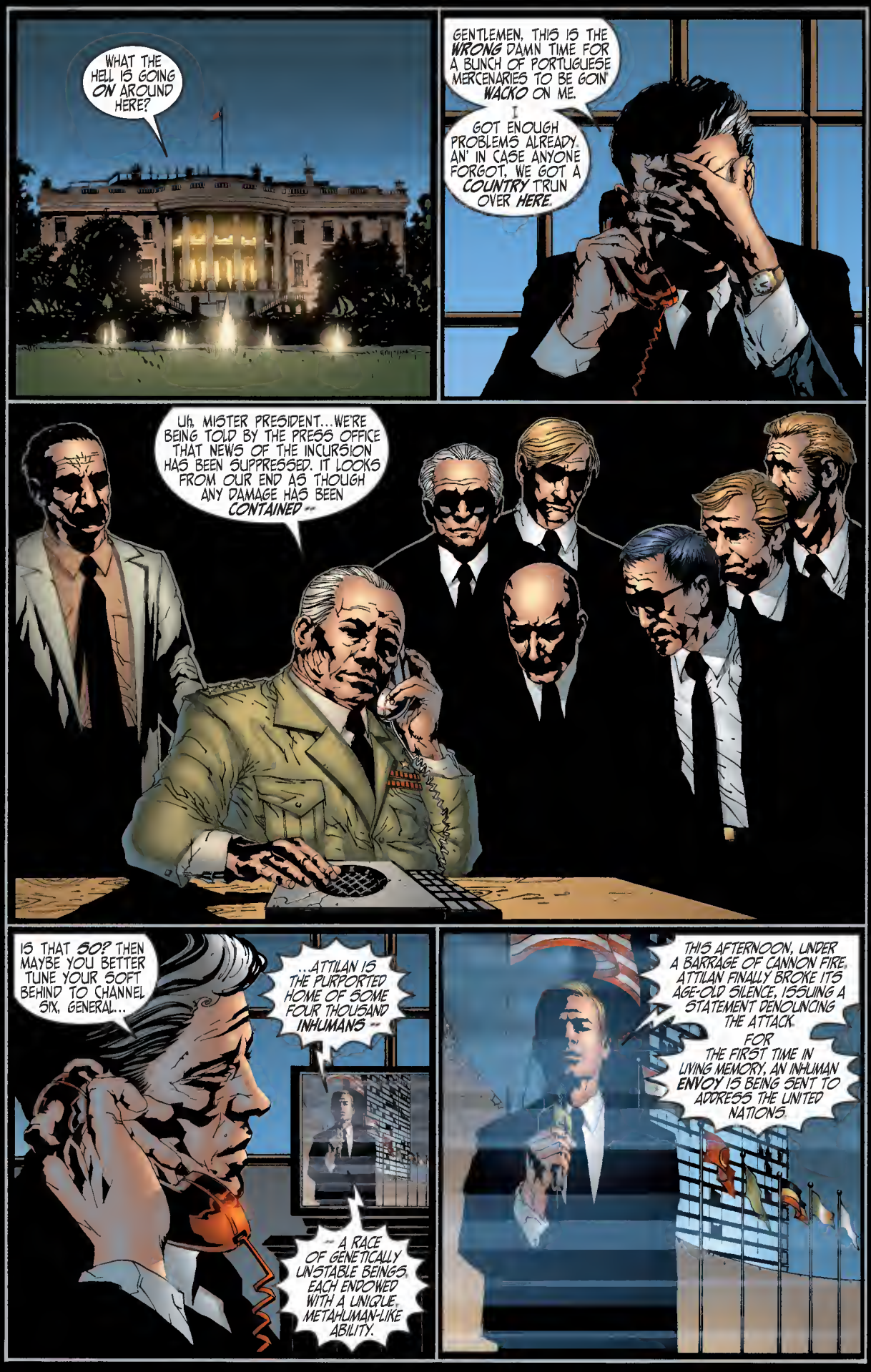

WHAT IS IT?
HIDDEN WITHIN THIS STATUE IS A SUBSONIC EMITTER, GIVEN TO US BY A...CONTACT WITHIN THE CITY. IT WILL ATTACK THE INTEGRITY OF ATTILAN'S INNER DEFENSIVE MECHANISM -- THE SURROUNDING NEGATIVE SPACE BARRIER.
HOWEVER, THE DEVICE WILL NOT WORK IF TELEPORTED. COLONEL STALYENKO EXPECTS YOU TO PLACE IT UNDER THE DOME BY MORE CONVENTIONAL MEANS...HE HAS A VERY HIGH OPINION OF YOU.
YOU WILL FIND HIS REQUEST CLARIFIED ON THIS COMPUTER DISK. IT ALSO CONTAINS TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS ON INHUMAN DEFENSIVE CAPABILITIES.
A TROJAN HORSE... HOW VERY THEATRICAL OF YOU, YURI.
COLONEL STALYENKO WISHES TO EXPRESS HIS GRATITUDE FOR YOUR ASSISTANCE. HE RELISHES THE OPPORTUNITY TO FINALLY WORK TOGETHER AGAINST A COMMON FOE.
REST ASSURED, THOUGH, HE DOES NOT MAKE THIS MOVE LIGHTLY. THESE INHUMANS... THEY ARE MOST FORMIDABLE --
EVERYTHING HAS A WEAKNESS. DAMN FREAKS MAY BE ABLE TO FLY BACKWARDS INTO THE SUN, BUT THEY DON'T KNOW SQUAT ABOUT SICK AND TWISTED.
TELL HIM I'LL LOOK INTO IT.
WAIT...THAT'S IT? YOU DIDN'T EVEN TELL ME YOUR NAME.
WHO ARE YOU?
I'M THE BLACK WIDOW.


"I'LL TELL YOU **THIS**," SAID THE OLD MAN, "DRAGONS DON'T **LIKE** NAUGHTY LITTLE BOYS."
"WHEN THE BEAST COMES OUT OF ITS LAIR TO DO BATTLE WITH YOU -- AND IT **WILL** COME -- THE SKY WILL BE AWASH WITH SMOKE AND FLAME."
"WHEN FIRST YOU SMELL ITS CHARCOAL BREATH," SAID THE OLD MAN, "TAKE **HEART**. IMAGINE YOURSELVES AS KNIGHTS IN SHINING ARMOR."
"YOUR VERY HUMANITY MUST BE THE SWORD THAT PIERCES THE DRAGON'S SCALY HIDE...
"...YOUR **FAITH** MUST BE YOUR SHIELD."


THE DRAGON WILL BREATHE FIRE AT YOU, AND TRY TO SCARE YOU. IT WILL FLY ABOVE YOUR HEADS AND FLAP AT YOU WITH ITS RUSTED WINGS.
WHEN YOU LOOK INTO ITS BLACK EYES, YOU WILL SEE THE FACE OF THE DEVIL HIMSELF -- UNFATHOMABLE AND MALICIOUS TO THE CORE.
THE CREATURE WILL SNAP AND SNARL, AND MAGICK YOU WITH ILLUSIONS UNFATHOMABLE...
KA-BOOM
...BUT YOUR GAZE WILL NEVER WAVER, BECAUSE YOU ARE TRUE OF HEART, AND PURE OF MIND AND SPIRIT.

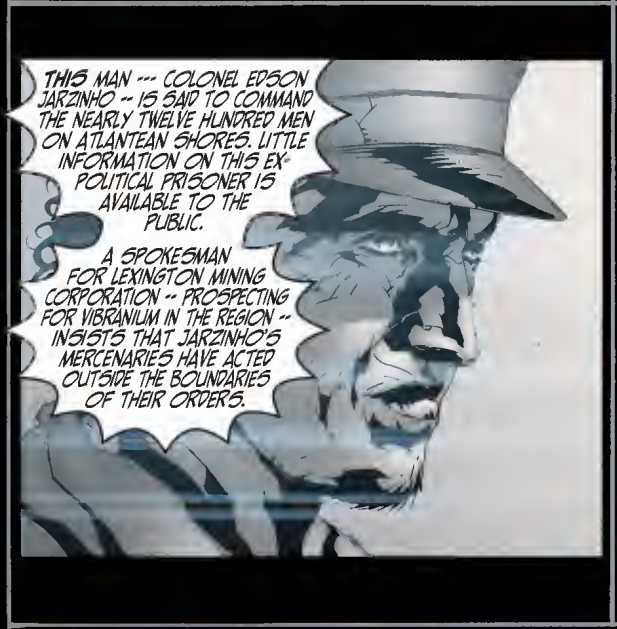

YOU SPECK OF HEATHEN DIRT...I SWEAR BY RANDAC, I WILL OPEN THE GROUND BENEATH YOU FOR YOUR INSOLENCE --
WAIT, GORGON...HOLD YOUR TEMPER! THE RIGHT OF CONFLICT IS BLACK BOLT'S TO DETERMINE...
"WHEN IT SEES THAT YOU ARE UNAFRAID, THE DRAGON WILL TUCK ITS TAIL AND FLEE.
"AND WHEN IT DOES, YOU WILL HAVE WON THE BATTLE."


WHY DON'T WE JUST WIPE THEM FROM THE FACE OF THE EARTH?
WE ARE YOUR GENERALS, YOUR ADVISORS, AND YOUR FRIENDS, BLACK BOLT. AND YET YOU REFUSE TO INCLUDE US IN DECISIONS THAT CONCERN US ALL.
WELL, UNLIKE YOU, COUSIN, I CANNOT CHOOSE TO REMAIN SILENT ON THIS MATTER. SOMETIMES, I WONDER IF YOUR ENIGMATIC DEMEANOR IS A FUNCTION NOT OF YOUR GENETIC CONDITION, BUT OF YOUR CHOOSING.
IN THE NAME OF EVOLUTION, COUSIN, WHY DO WE NOT DEMOLISH THESE PITIFUL HUMAN CREATURES?
WHY WON'T YOU TELL US --?


WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON AROUND HERE?
GENTLEMEN, THIS IS THE WRONG DAMN TIME FOR A BUNCH OF PORTUGUESE MERCENARIES TO BE GOIN' WACKO ON ME.
I GOT ENOUGH PROBLEMS ALREADY. AN' IN CASE ANYONE FORGOT, WE GOT A COUNTRY TRUN OVER HERE.
Uh, MISTER PRESIDENT...WE'RE BEING TOLD BY THE PRESS OFFICE THAT NEWS OF THE INCURSION HAS BEEN SUPPRESSED. IT LOOKS FROM OUR END AS THOUGH ANY DAMAGE HAS BEEN CONTAINED --
IS THAT SO? THEN MAYBE YOU BETTER TUNE YOUR SOFT BEHIND TO CHANNEL SIX, GENERAL...
...ATTILAN IS THE PURPORTED HOME OF SOME FOUR THOUSAND INHUMANS --
-- A RACE OF GENETICALLY UNSTABLE BEINGS, EACH ENDOWED WITH A UNIQUE, METAHUMAN-LIKE ABILITY.
THIS AFTERNOON, UNDER A BARRAGE OF CANNON FIRE, ATTILAN FINALLY BROKE ITS AGE-OLD SILENCE, ISSUING A STATEMENT DENOUNCING THE ATTACK.
FOR THE FIRST TIME IN LIVING MEMORY, AN INHUMAN ENVOY IS BEING SENT TO ADDRESS THE UNITED NATIONS.


DURING A PRELIMINARY OPEN-FLOOR DISCUSSION TODAY, THE PORTUGUESE GOVERNMENT ATTEMPTED TO SIGNIFICANTLY DISTANCE ITSELF FROM THE ACTIONS OF ANY PORTUGUESE NATIONALS IN THE ATTACKING MERCENARY FORCE.
PORTUGAL


AT THE SAME, TIME ACCUSATIONS WERE MADE CONCERNING REPEATED HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS WITHIN THE MYSTERIOUS CITY.
THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS HAS CALLED FOR A SPECIAL ASSEMBLY, BRINGING INTO QUESTION THE ROLE OF ANY MERCENARY FORCE SENT TO PROTECT BUSINESS INTERESTS ON FOREIGN SOIL.
AT THIS EARLY STAGE, SPECIFIC INFORMATION ON THE ATTACKING FORCE IS LIMITED.


THIS MAN --- COLONEL EDSON JARZINHO -- IS SAID TO COMMAND THE NEARLY TWELVE HUNDRED MEN ON ATLANTEAN SHORES. LITTLE INFORMATION ON THIS EX-POLITICAL PRISONER IS AVAILABLE TO THE PUBLIC.
A SPOKESMAN FOR LEXINGTON MINING CORPORATION -- PROSPECTING FOR VIBRANIUM IN THE REGION -- INSISTS THAT JARZINHO'S MERCENARIES HAVE ACTED OUTSIDE THE BOUNDARIES OF THEIR ORDERS.


IN THE MEANTIME, THE SITUATION REMAINS EXTREMELY TENSE, AND FOR NOW, SPECULATION MUST TAKE A BACK SEAT TO WONDERMENT...
GERMANY
SPAIN


...AS WE AWAIT THE AMBASSADOR OF AN ALIEN NATION, AND FIRST CONTACT.

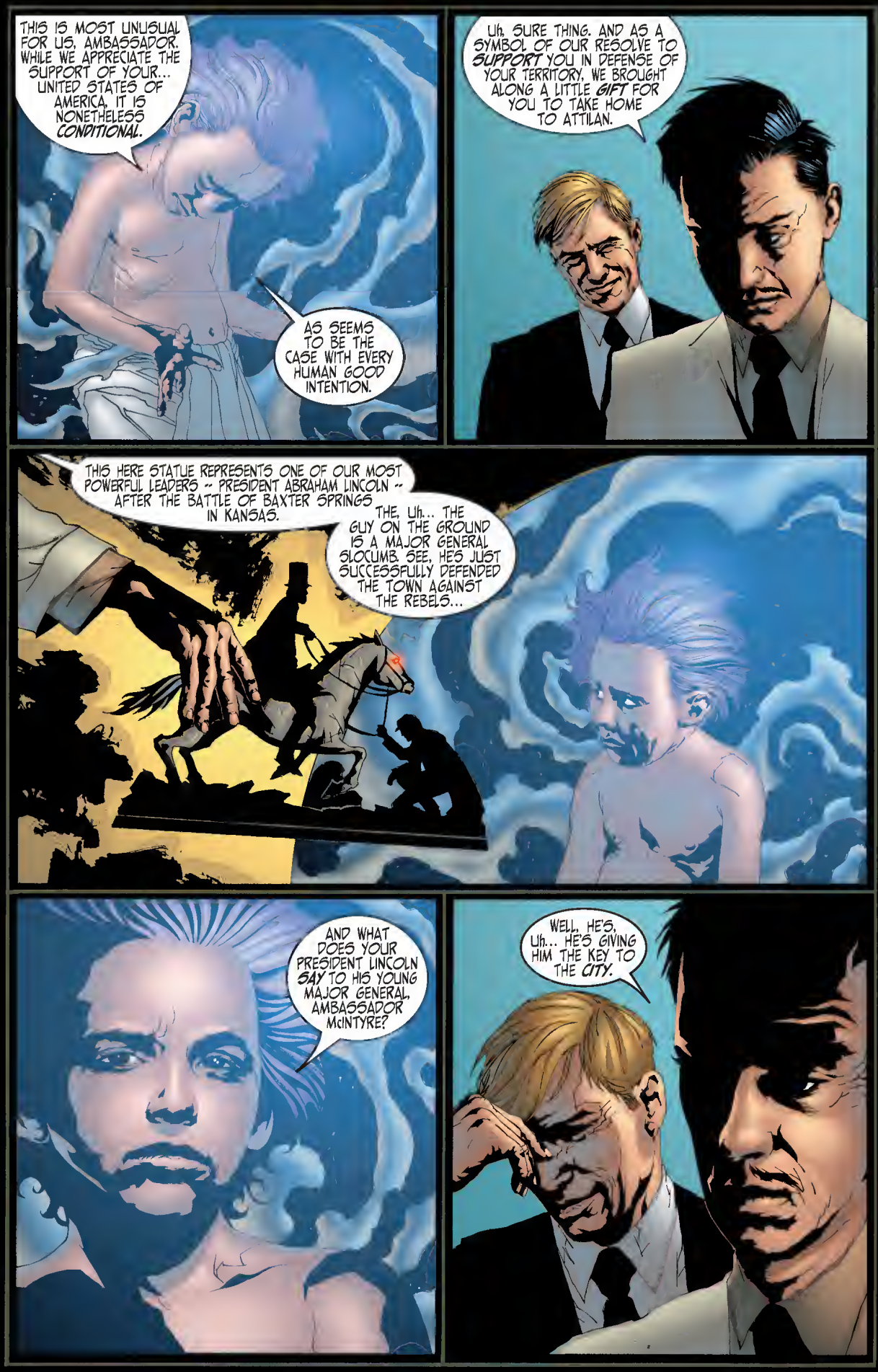

PEOPLE OF PLANET EARTH, I AM *MENDICUS* OF ATTILAN.
MARK ME WELL: I AM *NOT* HERE TO INDULGE IN DIPLOMACY.


I, Uh... ON BEHALF OF ALL NATIONS OF EARTH, MENDICUS, I WELCOME YOU TO THIS SPECIAL ASSEMBLY OF OUR UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL.
IT IS OUR FONDEST WISH THAT ANY DIALOGUE WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF YOUR GREAT NATION WILL BE THE FIRST OF MANY TO COME --
ED STATES
THIS DIALOGUE IS IRRELEVANT, AND THE CIRCUMSTANCES MOST UNWELCOME TO US. A GRAVE SITUATION HAS DEVELOPED ON ATLANTIS -- ONE WHICH MUST BE RESOLVED IMMEDIATELY.
THE HUMAN SOLDIERS ATTACKING OUR PERIMETER STRUCTURES ARE GREATLY ENDANGERED BY THEIR OWN ACTIONS. WE SEEK ASSURANCE OF THEIR IMMEDIATE REMOVAL.
WHILE WE WISH HUMANS NO HARM, THESE MEN MUST BE PROTECTED...
...OR THEY WILL SUFFER THE CONSEQUENCES OF THEIR ACTIONS.
WE UNDERSTAND YOUR CONCERNS. BUT THERE ARE PROTOCOLS --
TATES
HUMAN PROTOCOLS DO NOT CONCERN US. YOU CLAIM TO SPEAK FOR ALL NATIONS, THEREFORE THE DECISION IN THIS MATTER IS YOURS.
YOU WILL ACT IN ACCORD WITH OUR REQUEST, AND REMOVE YOUR KIND FROM ATTILAN'S BORDER.
WE EXPECT YOUR DECISION BY SUNSET.


BA-KOOM
BA-KOOM
DON'T BE AFRAID OF THE STORM, MY DEAR. IT CAN'T HARM YOU IF YOU'RE NOT AFRAID.
Oh, THAT'S A VERY SPECIAL THUNDER YOU HEAR, WOZ -- IT'S THE NOISE OF HUMAN AMBITION. IT HAS THE POWER TO MOVE MOUNTAINS, WHEN USED CORRECTLY.
"YOU HAVE TO PROMISE ME YOU'LL BE BRAVE. BECAUSE VERY SOON, WE'RE GOING TO BE LEAVING HERE, YOU AND I."
BA-KOOM
AND WHEN WE DO, LITTLE WOZ AND MAXIMUS THE MAD ARE GOING TO BE HEADING RIGHT INTO THE HEART OF THE STORM...


BA-KOOM
YOU MUSTN'T BE AFRAID OF THE HUMANS, WOZ. YOU'LL *LIKE* THE LITTLE APES, I THINK -- EVEN IF THEY ARE A BIT *TOXIC*.
BESIDES, THEY MORE THAN MAKE UP FOR IT WITH SLY INTELLECT.
BA-KOOM
DON'T YOU SEE WHAT THEY'RE *DOING?* DON'T YOU SEE WHY THEY'RE ATTACKING THE OUTER PALISADE IN THE MIDDLE OF A STORM?
BECAUSE THE CURRENT MUST BE TURNED *DOWN*, TO PROTECT AGAINST ELECTRICAL SURGES. A LIGHTNING STRIKE WOULD *OVERLOAD* THE SYSTEM!
"*THAT'S* THE CRACK IN THE WALL..."


AMBASSADOR MENDICUS, I HAVE BEEN ASKED BY MY GOVERNMENT TO EXTEND A HAND OF FRIENDSHIP TO THE PEOPLE OF ATTILAN.
IN THESE DARK TIMES YOU CAN BE ASSURED OF FULL SUPPORT BY THE PEOPLE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.
UNFORTUNATELY, THE SITUATION'S KINDA COMPLICATED. ANY UNILATERAL ACT OF AGGRESSION AGAINST FOREIGN NATIONALS WOULD BE CONSIDERED AN ACT OF WAR.
SEE, WE CAN'T JUST GO OFF AN' INTERFERE WITH OTHER PEOPLE'S LITTLE SCRAPES. THESE DAYS YOU GOTTA GET PERMISSION.
PROBLEM IS, EVERYONE ON THE SECURITY COUNCIL GETS AN EQUAL VOTE. THE PREVAILING THOUGHT SEEMS TO BE PRETTY NEGATIVE ON YOU GUYS. FOLKS HERE ARE KINDA RESENTFUL 'CAUSE OF THE ISOLATION THING --
FORGIVE ME, AMBASSADOR McINTYRE. BUT YOUR WORDING IS... DIFFICULT TO INTERPRET.
ARE YOU SAYING YOU WILL NOT HELP US, EVEN THOUGH YOU SUPPORT US?
WE WISH ONLY FOR YOUR PEOPLE TO LEAVE. WE HAVE NEVER WISHED FOR CONTACT WITH YOU -- THAT IS WHY WE ARE ISOLATED FROM YOU.
WELL, THEN, I GUESS YOU CAN INTERPRET THIS PRETTY EASILY.
Y'ALL ARE ON YOUR OWN FOR NOW.


THIS IS MOST UNUSUAL FOR US, AMBASSADOR. WHILE WE APPRECIATE THE SUPPORT OF YOUR... UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, IT IS NONETHELESS CONDITIONAL.
AS SEEMS TO BE THE CASE WITH EVERY HUMAN GOOD INTENTION.
Uh. SURE THING. AND AS A SYMBOL OF OUR RESOLVE TO SUPPORT YOU IN DEFENSE OF YOUR TERRITORY, WE BROUGHT ALONG A LITTLE GIFT FOR YOU TO TAKE HOME TO ATTILAN.
THIS HERE STATUE REPRESENTS ONE OF OUR MOST POWERFUL LEADERS -- PRESIDENT ABRAHAM LINCOLN -- AFTER THE BATTLE OF BAXTER SPRINGS IN KANSAS.
THE, Uh... THE GUY ON THE GROUND IS A MAJOR GENERAL SLOCUMB. SEE, HE'S JUST SUCCESSFULLY DEFENDED THE TOWN AGAINST THE REBELS...
AND WHAT DOES YOUR PRESIDENT LINCOLN SAY TO HIS YOUNG MAJOR GENERAL, AMBASSADOR McINTYRE?
WELL, HE'S, Uh... HE'S GIVING HIM THE KEY TO THE CITY.


BA-KOOM
WELL, I'LL GIVE THEM CREDIT FOR BEING *PERSISTENT*, KARNAK. BUT YOU STILL HAVE TO WONDER WHAT ON EARTH THEY'RE HOPING TO *ACHIEVE?*
YOU SHOULD BE VERY *PROUD* OF YOURSELF, BROTHER -- THE OUTER DEFENSE MECHANISM IS PERFORMING IN EXCESS OF EXPECTATIONS. I DRAW YOUR ATTENTION TO THIS SCHEMATIC.
"DO YOU SEE HOW THE PALISADE ABSORBS AND EVAPORATES EACH SHELL? THE HUMAN WEAPONRY IS CLEARLY OUTMATCHED BY OUR TECHNOLOGY."
HAHA! I ALMOST FEEL *SORRY* FOR THE POOR CREATURES. IF ONLY THEY UNDERSTOOD --
-- THE MORE AMMUNITION THEY WASTE AGAINST OUR WALL, THE *STRONGER* IT BECOMES.


BROTHER GORGON, SOMETHING HAS BEEN TROUBLING ME. UNTIL NOW, I HAD BEEN UNABLE TO PINPOINT THE EXACT NATURE OF MY CONCERN...
...BUT I THINK YOU MAY HAVE INADVERTENTLY FOUND IT FOR ME.
AS YOU KNOW, I HAVE BEEN CONCERNED THAT THE PALISADE WOULD NOT HOLD AGAINST SUCH AN ONSLAUGHT OF CANNON FIRE, EVEN THOUGH HUMAN WEAPONS ARE SEEMINGLY USELESS AGAINST IT.
AND SO THEY ARE! THEIR LITTLE TOY GUNS HAVE HAD NO EFFECT ON THE WALL WHATSOEVER.
"NOT TRUE, BROTHER, REMEMBER: WE REDUCE THE CURRENT DURING A STORM, AND FOR GOOD REASON -- TO PROTECT AGAINST ELECTRICAL OVERLOAD.
"I HAD THOUGHTS THIS TO BE THE REASON WHY THE HUMANS CAME NOW. PERHAPS THEY THOUGHT THE WALL SUFFICIENTLY WEAKENED FOR A CONVENTIONAL ATTACK."
BUT IF, AS YOU SAY, THE WALL IS ACTUALLY GAINING IN STRENGTH, THEN THAT MAY ALSO BE ITS WEAKNESS --
BY EVOLUTION -- THEY'RE NOT TRYING TO BREAK IT DOWN.
THEY'RE CHARGING IT UP!


BA-KOOM
BA-KOOM
BA-KOOM
THE BOYS YELPED WITH EXCITEMENT, AND RAN TOWARDS THEIR GLITTERING PRIZE...


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BRIAN HABERLIN COLORS RICHARD STARKINGS AND COMICRAFT'S WES ABBOTT LETTERS
NARCI DAKESIAN MANAGING EDITOR PALMIOTTI AND QUESADA EDITORS BOB HARRAS CHIEF

The story thus far:

AAAAAAAAAAAAAAA
AAAAAAAAAAAAAAA
AAAHHHHHHHHHHH
HHHHHHHHHHHH!!!

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SOMETHING ODDLY EFFEMINATE THIS WAY COMES
Let's just say, I was in HELL.
ENOUGH OF YOUR GAMES, MEPHISTO. OR MUST I RIP YOUR HEART OUT AGAIN?
LET MY PEOPLE GO
Ah... GEE, YOUR HIGHNESS MAYBE WE DON'T WANNA TICK HIM OFF...
AT LAST.
YOU WHOM I'VE SO LONGED FOR. WHOM I'VE LOVED...
RELEASE THEM YOURSELF. I GO ONLY WHERE I AM INVITED
I HAVE ONLY THE POWER THAT I AM GIVEN...
...LOVE ONLY THOSE WHO LOVE ME. DRAW NEARER, BELOVED
I HUNGER
BRRRTATATAT


SPEAK YOUR NAME DEMON --!
ARE YOU ACHEBE -- OR HIS EVIL MASTER --?!
BRRRTATATAT
WHAT'S IT MATTER? WHERE DOES HE END AND I BEGIN?
BRRRTATATAT
REAL BULLETS UKATANA MAKE NO MISTAKE, YOU CAN DIE HERE!
A SHOOT-OUT --?! IN HELL --?!
THIS CAN'T BE RIGHT...
WELL THAT CERTAINLY PUTS MY MIND AT EASE...
RATS
BIG RATS
LOTS OF BIG RATS
ALL NAMED BUSTER...
YOU ARE POWERLESS, DOG! YOU CANNOT FORCE ANYONE TO ENTER YOUR REALM AGAINST THEIR WILL
AND THE LONGER A PART OF YOU REMAINS SEPARATED FROM YOUR REALM, THE WEAKER YOU BECOME!
The heart.

LEFTOVERS


He was talking about Mephisto's HEART, in a jar next to the Chinese take-out.
HEY--! ANYBODY ALIVE IN THERE--?!
ZURI was a close friend to T'CHAKA, the client's father and former king. He was kinda like George Clinton without the rhythm. A tribal Uncle Fester, if you will. He'd been sleeping so long I assumed Mephisto had used his powers on him.
HIYA. JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES.
WHERE'S THE KITTY?
IF YOU ARE REFERRING TO MY MASTER, HE HAS NOT YET RETURNED.
BUT YOU EXPECT HIS ROYAL FANCY-PANTS? MIND IF I HANG OUT?
WHAT YOU DO IS IRRELEVANT TO ME, INSECT.
THAT'S SERGEANT INSECT, PALLY.
..GRUMBLE.. MUST BE SOMETHING TO EAT IN THIS ACCURSED PLACE..
LOOKS LIKE THERE'S SOME OF THAT CHINESE TAKE-OUT IN THERE*
CRIPES...HOWYA GET WHEEL OF FORTUNE ON THIS THING...
*TYP. Sgt. Tork met Panther and Zuri at a Chinese restaurant in issue #2 -- J&J.
AND GEEZ WHO THE HUMPTY-DUMPTY IS THIS GEEK--?
THAT IS A DEAD MAN--
--THE MOMENT I GET MY HANDS ON HIM. HIM, AND HIS SCRUFFY LITTLE DOG AS WELL.
-EEEURRUPP-

BUZZ


WE'RE READY, PRIME MINISTER.
ACHEBE: A MAN FOR OUR TIME
EXCELLENT.
PEOPLE OF WAKANDA... MY FRIENDS...I'M TOUCHED.
YOU LOVE ME. YOU REALLY DO. AND I LOVE YOU.
YOUR UNIVERSAL AND UNFLINCHING SUPPORT MEANS THE WORLD TO ME! AND, THOUGH THE BURDEN IS GREAT --
-- I ALONE CAN BRING PEACE AND STABILITY TO THIS PROUD NATION! AND, IS THAT NOT WHAT WE ALL WISH --
-- FOR THE CHILDREN.
YES. THE BLESSED ONES...OUR FUTURE.
HERE, LITTLE ONE -- MUATU WILL NOT BITE YOU--!
Bzzzt
Bzzzzzzz
--WASP--
#$@&%!
Bzzzzzzzzzzzzzz
RRWOOFL?!
LIVE
LIVE
LIVE
WELL, DON'T JUST STAND THERE YOU IDIOTS--!

FRIENDS


WAIT -- -- HE ATE THE HEART?
WELL... MAYBE HE NIBBLED ON IT A LITTLE. WE WERE ONLY GONE A COUPLE SECONDS
ROSS -- YOU'RE LYING
TO MY BOSS AT OCP?* NEVER
HOW COULD HE EAT A HEART?!
WITH DUCK SAUCE I BELIEVE. I'LL HAVE TO CHECK MY NOTES...
...LOOK -- LET'S FINISH THIS TOMORROW -- GO BACK HOME -- PICK UP THE BANJO --
*Office of the Chief Protocol -- J&J
WHY DO YOU KEEP STALLING? ROSS -- WHAT IS IT?
I WENT TO HELL NIKKI -- ISN'T THAT ENOUGH --?
-- A LOT OF WHAT HAPPENED NEXT IS... WELL IT'S PERSONAL... DON'T KNOW WHY HE EVEN TOLD ME.
MAYBE HE FELT IT WAS HIS OBLIGATION TO PROVIDE A FULL REPORT --
-- MAYBE HE TRUSTS US TO BE DISCREET MAYBE...
...MAYBE HE THINKS I'M HIS FRIEND
WHERE DID I LEAVE OFF?
THE RATS
Ah YES. THE RATS--

RATS


YOU SEEK TO FREE YOUR PEOPLE, O KING? THEN YOU MUST FOLLOW.
IF YOU DARE.
HAH! YOU THINK WE'RE GONNA FALL FOR THAT ONE ACHUBBY?
NOT BLOODY LIKE-LEEE--!
STAY HERE.
-- ARE WE--?
WAIT -- YOU'RE NOT GOING IN THERE--?!
I MUST BREAK HIS HOLD ON WAKANDA.
YOUR HIGHNESS --
-- IT'S A TRAP! C'MON -- IT'S LIKE, IN EVERY MOVIE!
I read somewhere that those who enter the gates of HELL should abandon all HOPE.
I think the CLIENT read it TOO.
STAY PUT, ROSS -- YOU'LL BE SAFE
DEFINE "SAFE."
Which is why he ignored the GATE.
MEPHISTO HAS ONLY THE POWER YOU GIVE HIM.
HE CANNOT FORCE YOU TO ENTER, AND HE CANNOT READ YOUR MIND.
JUST WAIT THERE -- I SHALL RETURN MOMENTARILY --

SEE NO EVIL


Someone once told me hell was a place of outer darkness. Fire and brimstone and all of that.
I was a little KID then.
Still too young to have learned the hard lesson --
-- that HELL is pretty much what you MAKE IT.
And, more often than NOT...
...it's where you LIVE.
HE CONSPIRED AGAINST THE THRONE. WE CAUGHT HIM SMUGGLING ORE FROM THE GREAT MOUND TO WHITE MEN --
-- IVORY HUNTERS
WE HATUT ZERAZE ARE THE MOST LOYAL OF YOU FATHER'S MANY SECURITY FORCES MY PRINCE
THE IVORY HUNTERS ARE PLANNING SOMETHING THIS MOTHERLESS CUR SHALL REVEAL THE TRUTH...
--?! YOU -- HUNTER -- THE WHITE WOLF --!
ha-TOO ser-aH-say = "Dogs of War" -- J&J
...WITH A LITTLE PERSUASION...
WITH TORTURE--?!?
IF MY FATHER KNEW HE WOULD --
IF HE KNEW THERE'S A LOT OF THINGS YOUR FATHER KNOWS MY PRINCE
AND MANY THINGS HE CHOOSES NOT TO KNOW.
THAT'S WHAT HE HAS ME FOR.

APOCALYPSE THEN




Posing as an ivory hunter, Klaw was actually a geologist who'd charted the track of a meteor he believed hit Earth: a meteor he believed might have unique properties.
He'd managed a low-level reconnaissance of the mound and had been studying the properties of the ORE found within it— something he called VIBRANIUM. It was a revolutionary metal that could ABSORB SOUND, and there was enough of it there to make Klaw the richest man in the WORLD. Klaw's backers supplied him with his own personal ARMY, and he headed off to the secret kingdom.
He tried to sweet talk T'Chaka into a deal. Y'know, "Sell me this land in exchange for these pretty fire beads."
KLAW -- THEY'RE NOT STOPPING! WE'VE GOT TO GET OUT OF HERE!
SHUT UP!
YOU'LL BLOODY WELL GET US ALL KILLED!
When THAT didn't work, Klaw went to "Plan B."
And, for a MINUTE, Klaw looked like Custer at Little Big Horn.
BLAM
But, moments later, T'Chaka looked like Sitting Bull at Wounded Knee.
Klaw called it a SOUND BLASTER. It transformed sound into powerful energy he called "solidified sound."
KRAZZ
Powered by conventional means, the thing was deadly.
FATHER-- --NOOO!
ZURI-- RELEASE ME! I COMMAND IT--!
I AM SORRY, PRINCE ---
-- SUCH IS THE WILL OF THE KING --!
Powered by VIBRANIUM...


... it was the APOCALYPSE.
...ROSS...
... ...NO ONE KNOWS FOR SURE HOW MANY PEOPLE DIED THAT DAY.
RECHARGE THE SOUND BLASTER
DESTROY THE VILLAGE.
BURY ELLIOT.
I'M GOING UP TO GET THE *MINING* STARTED


And that was how the Wakandans' first contact with the modern world went.
The king was dead.
Long live THE KING.
-- AND HAVE DELTA CREW MOVE THE DIGGER OVER TO THE WEST RIDGE..
... MAKE MY CAMP *HERE*-- AND HAVE SOMEONE GET SOME *TEA* GOING, WILL YOU --?
KARAZZI
DEVILS AND THE *SEVENTH HELL!* WHO THE BLOODY *BLAZES* ARE YOU --?!


I'M THE KING.
FLARAZZI
AAARRGH!
MY... HAND--!
Klaw's sound blaster was RUINED. The client hadn't re-charged it properly --
-- and had overloaded the thing shooting the ATTACK CHOPPERS out of the SKY.
Stripped of their CANNONS, Klaw's army was, essentially, the Backstreet Boys surrounded by the Wu Tang Clan --
-- and all of their COUSINS.
YOU'VE SHATTERED MY HAND -- LOST ME MY MEN -- BUT I'LL RETURN! THE VIBRANIUM WILL YET BE MINE!
RUN, KLAW, RUN! IT'S CERTAIN DEATH TO REMAIN HERE!


The experience DEVASTATED the client. So MUCH so, in fact, he almost FORGOT...
...that it wasn't really happening.
LEAVE ME.
This was one of Mephisto's GAMES. A TIME SHIFT illusion...
I ASSUME THERE IS SOME POINT TO THIS.
INDEED THERE IS, UKATANA...
...BUT YOU TELL ME.
MEPHISTO.
I'VE BEEN CALLED THAT.
BUT I AM SO MUCH MORE.
I AM THAT WHICH ONLY TRUE GODS CAN SEE.
I SUPPOSE I WANTED TO REMIND YOU OF YOUR OBLIGATIONS... OF WHAT'S AT STAKE...
...AND MY PRICE.
SIX MILLION SOULS FOR ONE, O KING --
-- IT'S A STEAL.
FINE. YOU WANT MY SOUL?
IT'S YOURS.


THERE ARE OF COURSE, TERMS --?
FIRST -- END THIS ILLUSION. IT OFFENDS ME.
YOU WILL TAKE YOUR HAND OFF WAKANDA FOREVER. THE SOULS OF MY PEOPLE WILL BE FOREVER BEYOND YOUR REACH.
GO ON.
AND YOU WILL NEVER APPEAR BEFORE ME AGAIN.
DONE.
I WILL RELINQUISH MY HOLD ON ACHEBE, HOWEVER --
-- THE REST IS UP TO YOU.
YOU ARE THE KING OF LIARS, MEPHISTO.
GIVING UP ACHEBE COST YOU NOTHING.
ACHEBE IS JUST A SHILL -- SOMEONE FOR ME TO HISS AT. WE BOTH KNOW MY TRUE ENEMY --
-- HE WHO IS TRULY AFTER MY KINGDOM -- HAS YET TO SHOW HIS FACE.
Mephisto went after the client like Ken Starr with a subpoena.
Like a JUNKIE getting a FIX.
In fact, Mephisto was SO caught up in it, he didn't even NOTICE touching the Panther's SOUL had transported him --
-- to a place he'd NEVER BEEN.
-- Eh --?
WHAT TREACHERY IS THIS --?!
NO TREACHERY, DEMON. YOU WANTED MY SOUL -- TAKE ALL OF IT --
-- FOR MY SPIRIT HAS BEEN FOREVER JOINED TO THAT OF -- THE PANTHER GOD!


NONSENSE
TRIBAL SUPERSTITIOUS CLAPTRAP. THERE IS NO "PANTHER GOD".
I'D HAVE KNOWN IT.
YOU DID KNOW IT. YOU JUST DISMISSED IT.
YOU SAID YOU'VE OBSERVED ME ALL OF MY LIFE.
IF THAT IS TRUE, THEN YOU WERE THERE --
"-- DURING MY RITE OF ASCENSION.
"I HAD TO FACE SIX OF WAKANDA'S MOST FEARSOME WARRIORS --
"... INCLUDING MY FATHER'S CLOSEST FRIEND.
YOU ARE KING BY RIGHT T'CHALLA, BUT TO LEAD --
-- TO BE CHIEFTAIN OF THE PANTHER CLAN --
-- YOU MUST GET PAST ME!
KAAAPP
"I NEARLY DIED THAT DAY, BUT I EARNED THE RESPECT OF THE WAKANDAN TRIBES..."


"... AND LEARNED THE SECRET OF A SPECIAL HEART-SHAPED HERB.
"THE HERB ENHANCED MY AGILITY, STRENGTH AND SENSES...
"... AND HELPED ME BECOME ONE WITH THE SPIRIT OF THE PANTHER GOD --
"-- AS ALL THE LEADERS OF THE PANTHER CLAN HAD BEFORE ME."
YOU COULD NOT HAVE KNOWN THIS BECAUSE YOU CANNOT READ MINDS OR GO WHERE YOU ARE NOT INVITED* --
-- TO THIS PLACE, FOR EXAMPLE.
FASCINATING. BUT WHAT OF IT?
*which Mephisto admitted last issue -- J&J
THIS, DEMON LORD.
MY ANCESTORS ARE THE MOST NOBLE SOULS THAT EVER WALKED THE EARTH --
-- AND MY SOUL IS FOREVER ENTWINED WITH THEIRS.
MY SOUL IS YOURS NOW. WHICH MEANS --
GRRWWLL
YOU MUST TAKE US ALL --!
WHA --?!


SO... CANCELLED. Huh? THE WHOLE LINE --?
AND HEY -- WHO KNEW THEY HAD A STARBUCKS DOWN HERE...
WHAT THE HEY--?!
Y'KNOW -- -- I'M JUST WILLING TO BET THAT'S NOT A GOOD SIGN...
SWAASSH
YESS! BWAHAHAH!
...SUCH NOBILITY...
...SUCH PURITY...
...I NEVER IMAGINED...
...SO SWEET A VICTORY...


I would have run if I had somewhere to go.
YESSSSS! MORRE!
I tried not to imagine what was going on in there --
-- though I did keep listening for Village People tunes...
-- ENOUGH!
FOR NOW AT LEAST.
SO SHALL THE LORD OF DARKNESS REST AND ABIDE -- TO RETURN AND RENEW HIS FEASTING ON --
NO -- I DON'T THINK SO, YOU'RE SATIATED --
-- THEY ARE NOT.
...Ah...


GRRWWLL
-- BEGONE! I COMMAND THEE --!
I SHALL RETURN FOR EACH OF YOU... IN DUE TIME...
GRROWWLL
WRONG, MEPHISTO -- THE TIME IS NOW.
BACK --! BACK, I SAY!
NO MORE!
CANNOT CONTAIN SO MANY SOULS --!
A DEAL IS A DEAL, MEPHISTO.
THEY WILL DESTROY ME --!
UNFORTUNATE.
YES -- BUT THEY, TOO, WILL BE CONSIGNED TO OBLIVION!
RELEASE ME FROM MY OATH -- SAVE ME AND YOU SAVE THEM --!
YOU KNOW MY PRICE.


FRUMP
I'M... I'M HOME -- I'M -- I'M ALIVE --! AND... I HAVE NO PANTS...
I HAVE NO PANTS! I HAVE NO PANTS!
GOD, I LOVE THIS JOB!
Ah -- ZURI --
-- WHAT'S THAT YOU'RE SNACKING ON --?
KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK
...
...Ah...
-- ?!
...MORTALS...

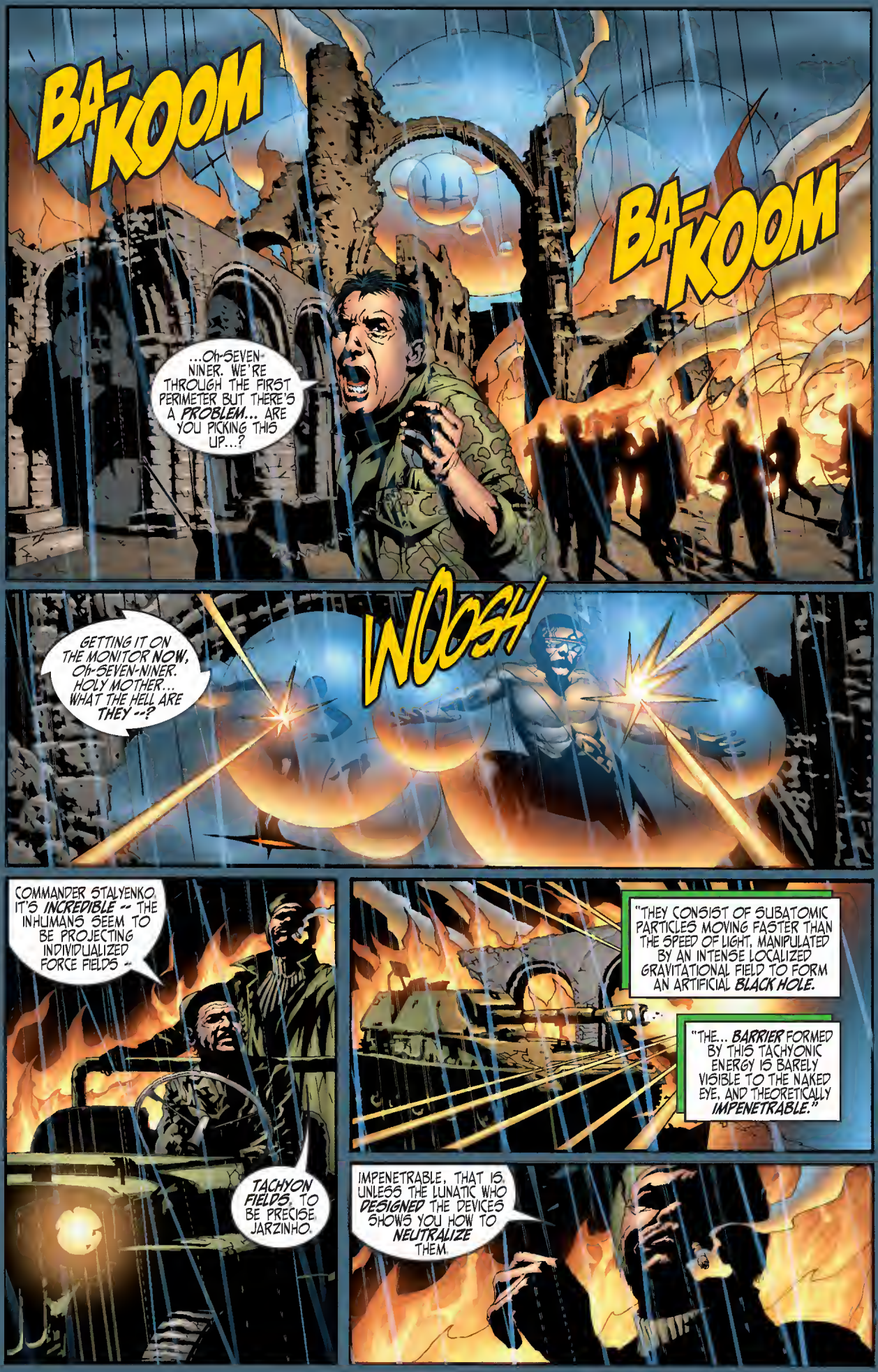
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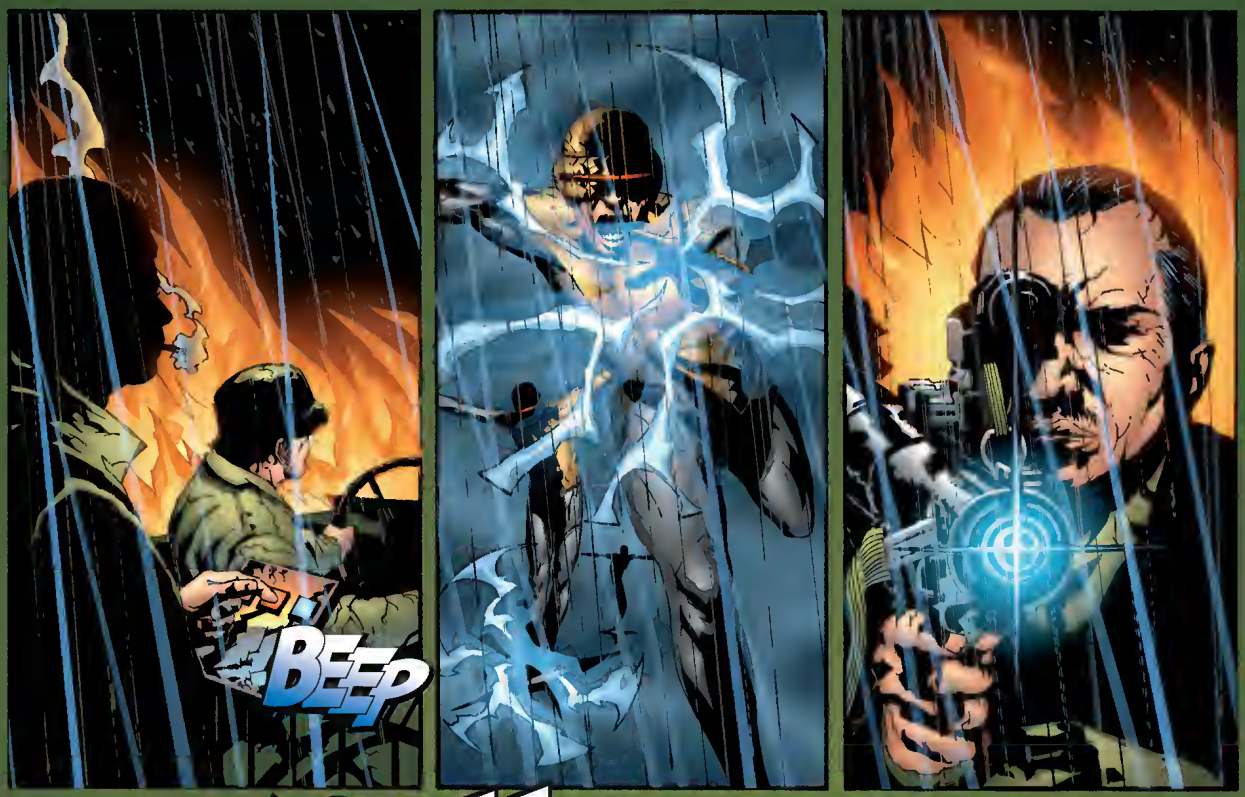


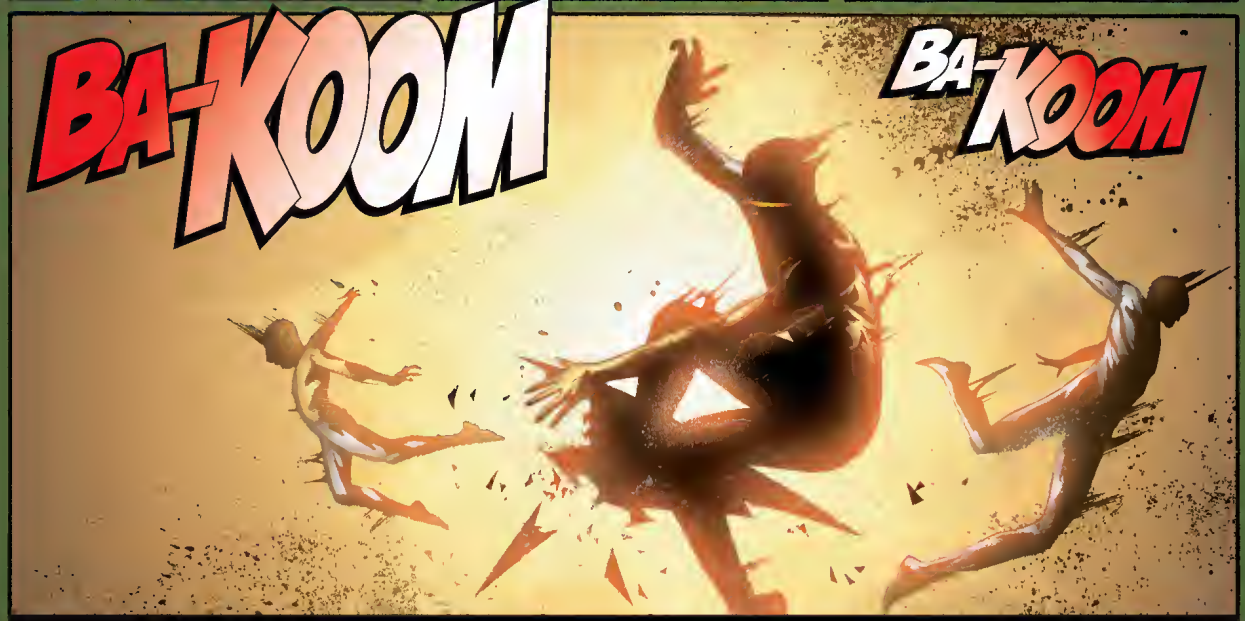

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BA-KOOM
BA-KOOM
...Oh-Seven-Niner. We're through the first perimeter but there's a PROBLEM... are you picking this up...?
WOOSH
Getting it on the monitor NOW, Oh-Seven-Niner. Holy mother... what the hell are THEY --?
Commander Stalyenko. It's INCREDIBLE -- the Inhumans seem to be projecting individualized force fields --
TACHYON FIELDS. To be precise, Jarzinho.
"They consist of subatomic particles moving faster than the speed of light, manipulated by an intense localized gravitational field to form an artificial BLACK HOLE.
"The... BARRIER formed by this tachyonic energy is barely visible to the naked eye, and theoretically IMPENETRABLE."
Impenetrable, that is, unless the lunatic who DESIGNED the devices shows you how to NEUTRALIZE them.





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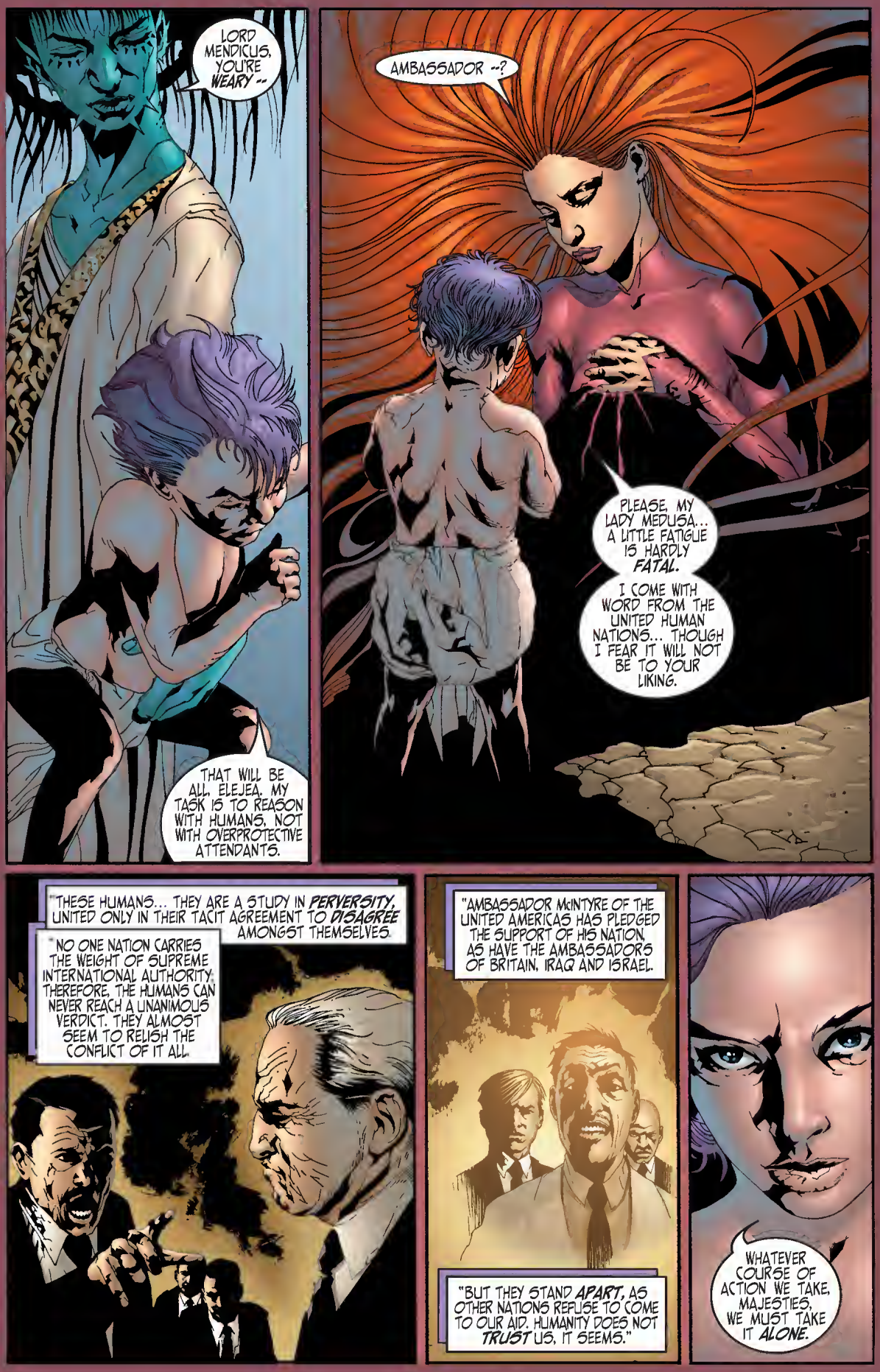


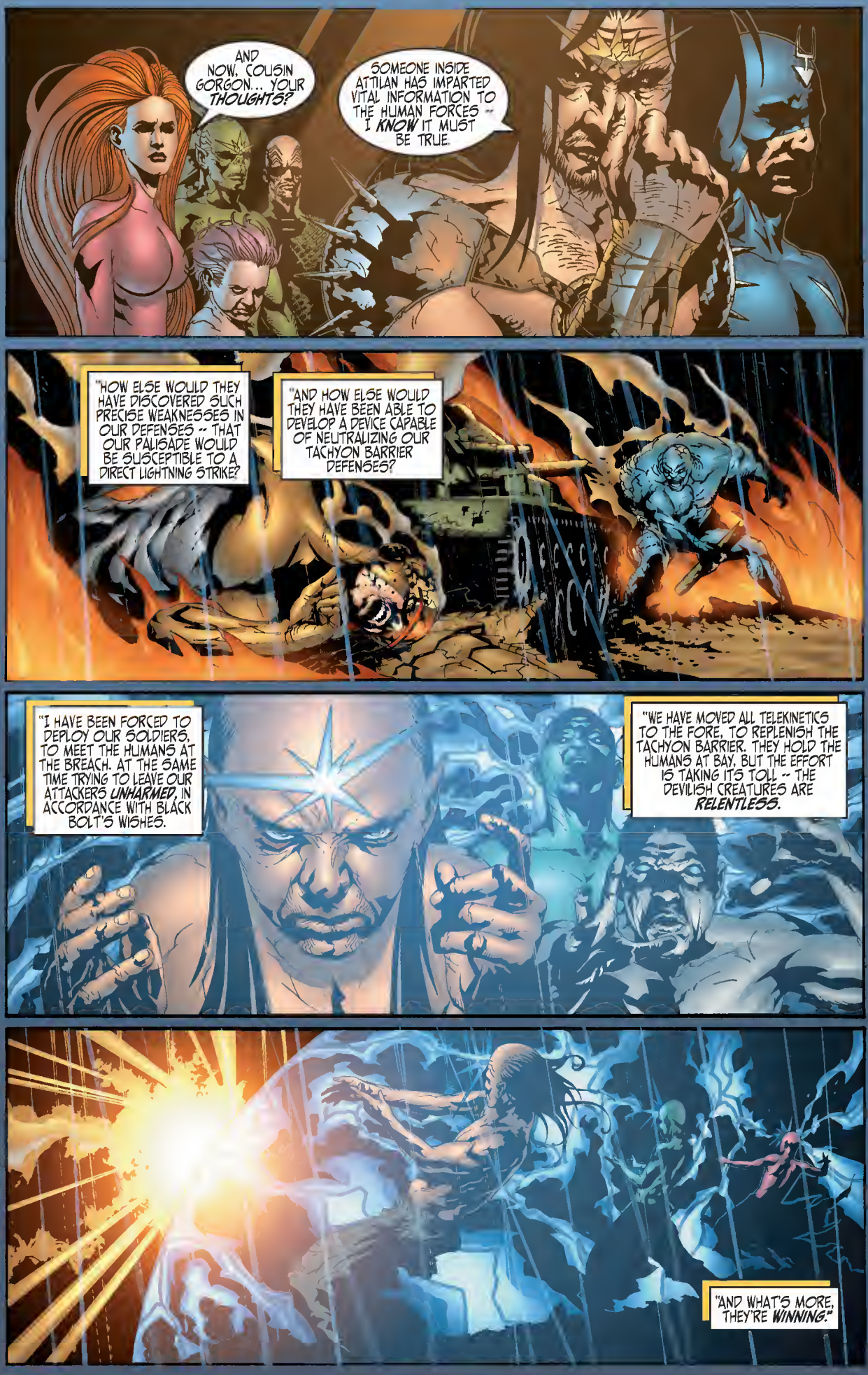

THESE HUMANS... FOR ALL THEIR AUDACITY THEY ARE FRAGILE. INSIGNIFICANT ANIMALS... JUST SKIN AND BONES AND NOTHING IN BETWEEN. YOU COULD OBLITERATE THEM WITH A THOUGHT.
WITH A BLINK OF YOUR EYE YOU COULD MANIPULATE EVERY ELECTRON IN EVERY ATOM OF THEIR BODIES. YOU COULD TURN THEM ALL INTO STONE.
SO WHY DON'T YOU?
YOU'RE PUTTING YOUR ENTIRE CITY AT RISK. DO YOU TRULY BELIEVE THE HUMAN INVADERS POSE NO THREAT?
IF THAT IS TRUE, HOW DID THEY MAKE IT THIS FAR?


All you have to do is give the WORD. Are you so arrogant that you'll spare these creatures' lives on a mere WHIM?
Only gods and generals have THAT right.
Oh yes, but you have the MIGHT. Might enough to draw electrons from earth's atmosphere... enough to feed Attilan's gargantuan batteries for the next ten millennia.
You, who once accidentally destroyed your own home with a mere whisper -- why don't you simply walk out to the humans and tell them to go AWAY?
Because there's far more to this situation than meets the eye, ISN'T there? Of all people, only YOU understand its true COMPLEXITY.
This time you're POWERLESS.


MURDERERS!
DO YOU HEAR ME, COUSIN? THE HUMANS HAVE KILLED ONE OF OUR NUMBER -- ONE OF YOUR ROYAL GUARD! THEY'VE SOMEHOW MANAGED TO TAKE DOWN ALL OF OUR TACHYON PARTICLE EMITTERS.
I SWEAR, YOU'LL GIVE THE ORDER TO ATTACK BEFORE I LOSE MY TEMPER!
DAMN YOU, BLACK BOLT... YOU'RE PUTTING US ALL AT RISK, AND WITH NO JUSTIFIABLE EXPLANATION!
IS IT POSSIBLE YOU'RE ACTUALLY AFRAID?!

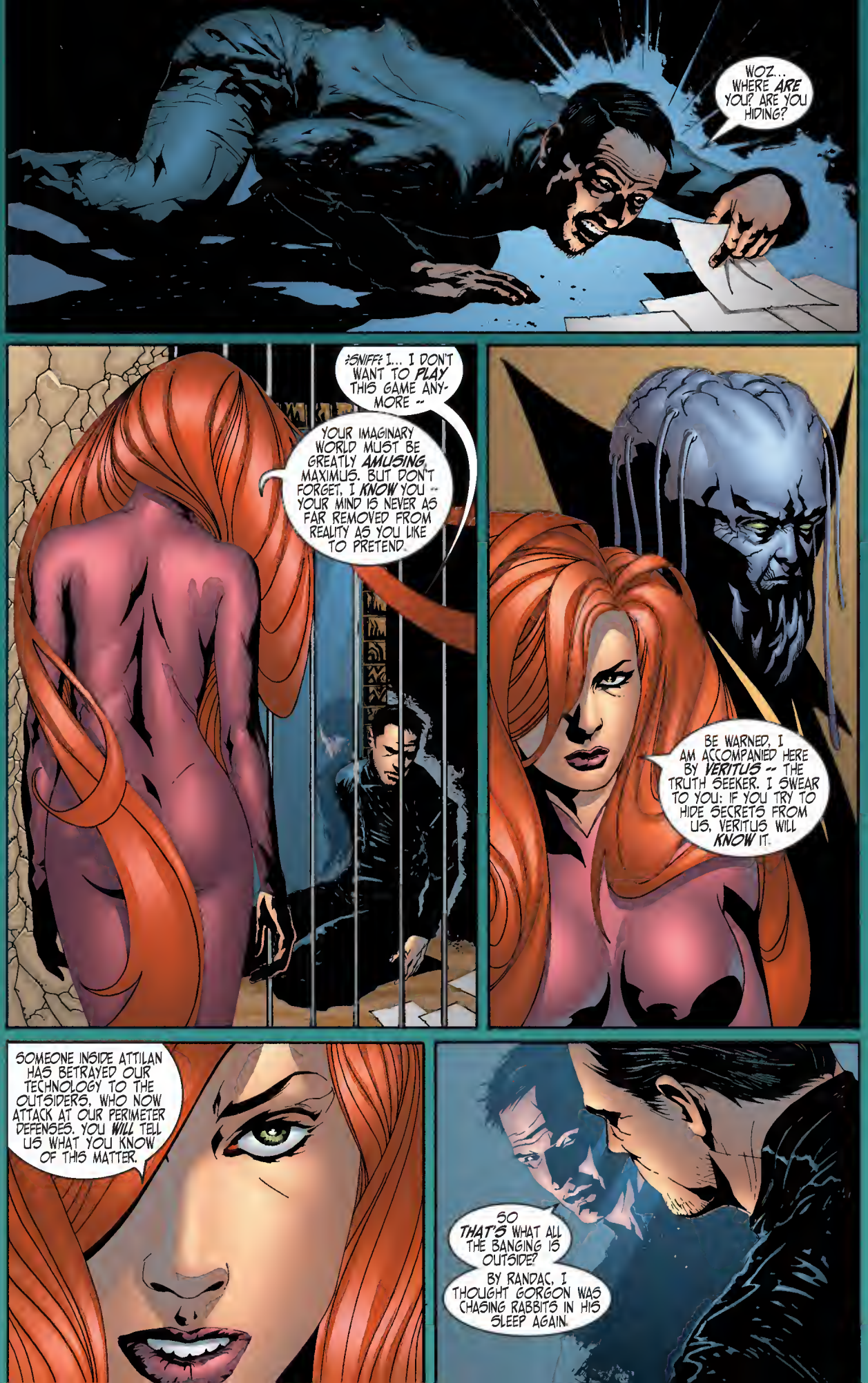

Oh... Oh, MY LORD... I... I MEANT NO DISRESPECT.
PLEASE, FORGIVE MY IMPETUOUS TONGUE. AS IN ALL THINGS, THE DECISION REMAINS *YOURS*, MAJESTY.
BUT THE *HUMANS* --
NOBLE GORGON, OUR KING IS LISTEN FOR WORD OF AMBASSADOR *MENDICUS*.
TRITON SPEAKS TRUE, BROTHER -- WE'VE SENT THE CHILDLING TO GATHER SUPPORT FOR OUR POSITION AMONG THE HUMAN LEADERS. WE AWAIT HIS RETURN MOMENTARILY.
UNDERSTAND, GORGON... IT IS BLACK BOLT'S *SPECIFIC* DESIRE THAT WE RESOLVE THIS CONFLICT WITHOUT THE USE OF FORCE AGAINST THE HUMANS --
AND SO *MUST* IT BE... IF THAT IS THE WILL OF OUR KING.


LORD MENDICUS, YOU'RE WEARY --
THAT WILL BE ALL, ELEJEA. MY TASK IS TO REASON WITH HUMANS, NOT WITH OVERPROTECTIVE ATTENDANTS.
AMBASSADOR --?
PLEASE, MY LADY MEDUSA... A LITTLE FATIGUE IS HARDLY FATAL.
I COME WITH WORD FROM THE UNITED HUMAN NATIONS... THOUGH I FEAR IT WILL NOT BE TO YOUR LIKING.
"THESE HUMANS... THEY ARE A STUDY IN PERVERSITY, UNITED ONLY IN THEIR TACIT AGREEMENT TO DISAGREE AMONGST THEMSELVES.
"NO ONE NATION CARRIES THE WEIGHT OF SUPREME INTERNATIONAL AUTHORITY. THEREFORE, THE HUMANS CAN NEVER REACH A UNANIMOUS VERDICT. THEY ALMOST SEEM TO RELISH THE CONFLICT OF IT ALL.
"AMBASSADOR McINTYRE OF THE UNITED AMERICAS HAS PLEDGED THE SUPPORT OF HIS NATION, AS HAVE THE AMBASSADORS OF BRITAIN, IRAQ AND ISRAEL.
"BUT THEY STAND APART, AS OTHER NATIONS REFUSE TO COME TO OUR AID. HUMANITY DOES NOT TRUST US, IT SEEMS."
WHATEVER COURSE OF ACTION WE TAKE, MAJESTIES, WE MUST TAKE IT ALONE.


AND NOW, COUSIN GORGON... YOUR *THOUGHTS?*
SOMEONE INSIDE ATTILAN HAS IMPARTED VITAL INFORMATION TO THE HUMAN FORCES -- I *KNOW* IT MUST BE TRUE.
"HOW ELSE WOULD THEY HAVE DISCOVERED SUCH PRECISE WEAKNESSES IN OUR DEFENSES -- THAT OUR PALISADE WOULD BE SUSCEPTIBLE TO A DIRECT LIGHTNING STRIKE?
"AND HOW ELSE WOULD THEY HAVE BEEN ABLE TO DEVELOP A DEVICE CAPABLE OF NEUTRALIZING OUR TACHYON BARRIER DEFENSES?
"I HAVE BEEN FORCED TO DEPLOY OUR SOLDIERS, TO MEET THE HUMANS AT THE BREACH. AT THE SAME TIME TRYING TO LEAVE OUR ATTACKERS *UNHARMED*, IN ACCORDANCE WITH BLACK BOLT'S WISHES.
"WE HAVE MOVED ALL TELEKINETICS TO THE FORE, TO REPLENISH THE TACHYON BARRIER. THEY HOLD THE HUMANS AT BAY, BUT THE EFFORT IS TAKING ITS TOLL -- THE DEVILISH CREATURES ARE *RELENTLESS.*
"AND WHAT'S MORE, THEY'RE *WINNING.*"


MISTER BIXBY -- I'M DELIGHTED YOU COULD JOIN US.
YEAH, WELL... AT LEAST ONE OF US IS HAVING A GOOD TIME. THIS PLACE STINKS. THE FOOD STINKS. THE AIR STINKS. AND WORST OF ALL... I STINK.
JESUS, STALYENKO... COULDN'T YOU HAVE PICKED A NICER PLACE TO COMMIT SUICIDE -- LIKE HAWAII, OR SOMETHING?
HOW WONDERFULLY AMERICAN OF YOU.
YOU KNOW, IN THE OLD DAYS I'D HAVE SET UP MY WAR ROOM IN SIBERIA -- THEN YOU WOULD HAVE REASON TO COMPLAIN ABOUT THE COLD.
YEAH, WELL... I'M NOT SO FRAIL I CAN'T UPHOLD MY END OF THE BARGAIN, COMMANDER. FOR WHICH I EXPECT TO BE WELL PAID --
QUITE SO. AND THE PRODUCT --?
"THEY'VE TAKEN IT INSIDE ATTILAN."


GOOD... GOOD. I ALWAYS KNEW I COULD RELY ON YOU. OF COURSE THERE'S NO MATCH FOR GOOD OLD CIA INGENUITY --
THIS KING OF THEIRS... BLACK BOLT -- HOW CAN YOU BE SO SURE HE WON'T LOSE PATIENCE, AND TEAR US ALL A FEW NEW HOLES?
"KNOW THINE ENEMY," MISTER BIXBY. HIS STRENGTH IS HIS WEAKNESS. HIS ALTRUISM IS THE KEY.
"BLACK BOLT KNOWS HE COULD DESTROY US IN A MICROSECOND -- HE FEELS SORRY FOR US. BEING A MAN OF HONOR, IT WOULD BE BENEATH HIM TO DESTROY US.
"AND SO HE STAYS IN HIS IVORY TOWER, CERTAIN THAT HE IS UNTOUCHABLE. AND AS LONG AS HE UNDERESTIMATES US, WE'LL TAKE THAT WEAKNESS AND EXPLOIT IT."
YOU KNOW, IN A WAY, I FEEL SORRY FOR HIM. HE'LL BE SO BUSY WATCHING WHAT'S GOING ON OUTSIDE HIS FRONT DOOR...
"...HE WON'T SEE WHAT'S HAPPENING RIGHT UNDER HIS VERY NOSE."


WOZ... WHERE ARE YOU? ARE YOU HIDING?
SNIFF! I... I DON'T WANT TO PLAY THIS GAME ANY-MORE --
YOUR IMAGINARY WORLD MUST BE GREATLY AMUSING, MAXIMUS. BUT DON'T FORGET. I KNOW YOU -- YOUR MIND IS NEVER AS FAR REMOVED FROM REALITY AS YOU LIKE TO PRETEND.
BE WARNED, I AM ACCOMPANIED HERE BY VERITUS -- THE TRUTH SEEKER. I SWEAR TO YOU: IF YOU TRY TO HIDE SECRETS FROM US, VERITUS WILL KNOW IT.
SOMEONE INSIDE ATTILAN HAS BETRAYED OUR TECHNOLOGY TO THE OUTSIDERS, WHO NOW ATTACK AT OUR PERIMETER DEFENSES. YOU WILL TELL US WHAT YOU KNOW OF THIS MATTER.
SO THAT'S WHAT ALL THE BANGING IS OUTSIDE?
BY RANDAC, I THOUGHT GORGON WAS CHASING RABBITS IN HIS SLEEP AGAIN.


WELL, WHOEVER'S TRYING TO GET IN, I HOPE THEY COME AND VISIT ME.
I SHALL HAVE MY BEST DINNERWARE LAID OUT FOR THEM. OF COURSE. HAH!
I WONDER IF THEY LIKE CHEESE? I LIKE CHEESE. AND WOOL.


WHAT DO YOU SEE, VERITUS -- DOES HE KNOW ANYTHING?
I... I SEE NOTHING, MY LADY.



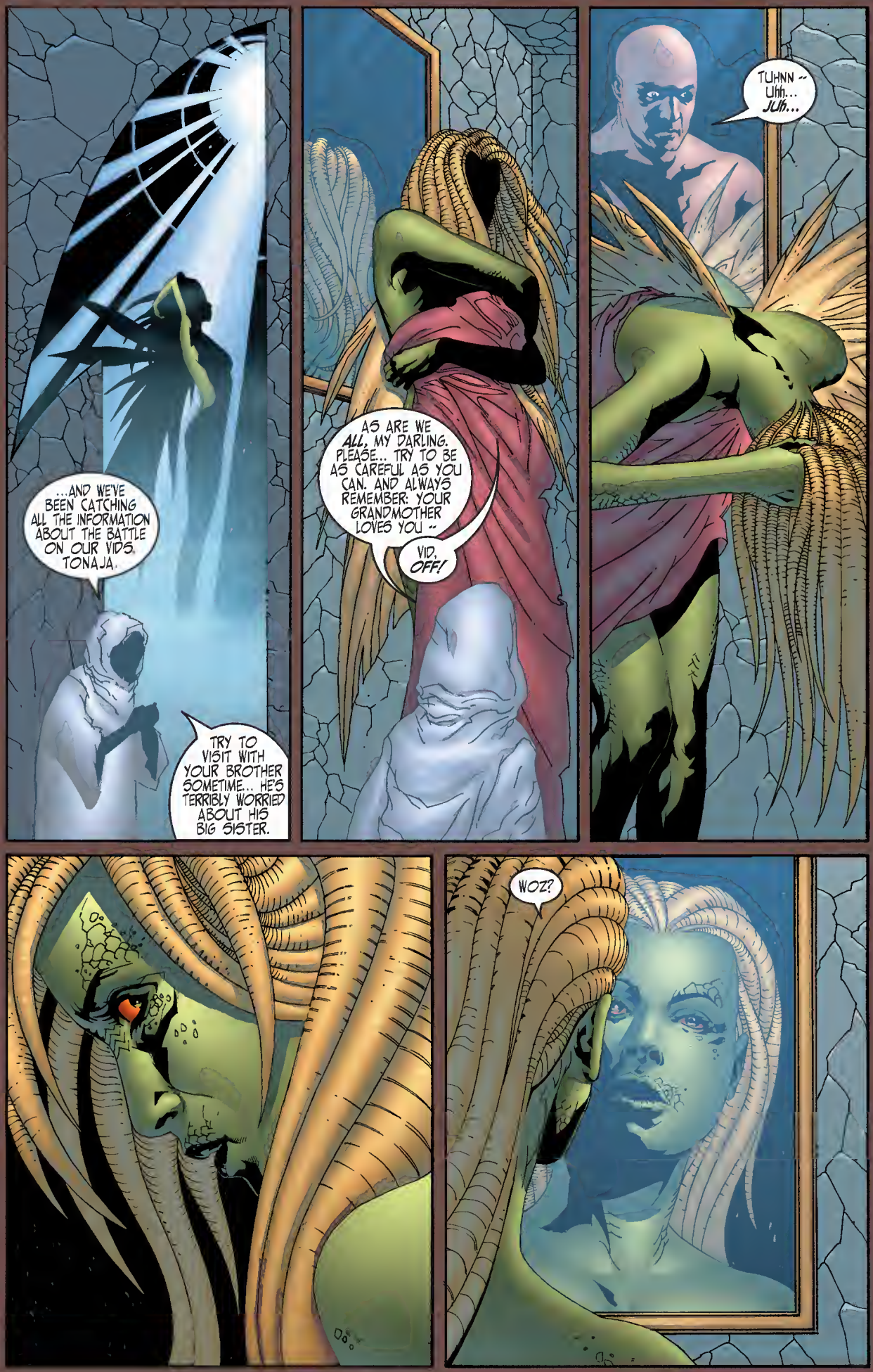

NNAHH! STOP IT! STOP IT!
I WON'T... LET YOU... IN!

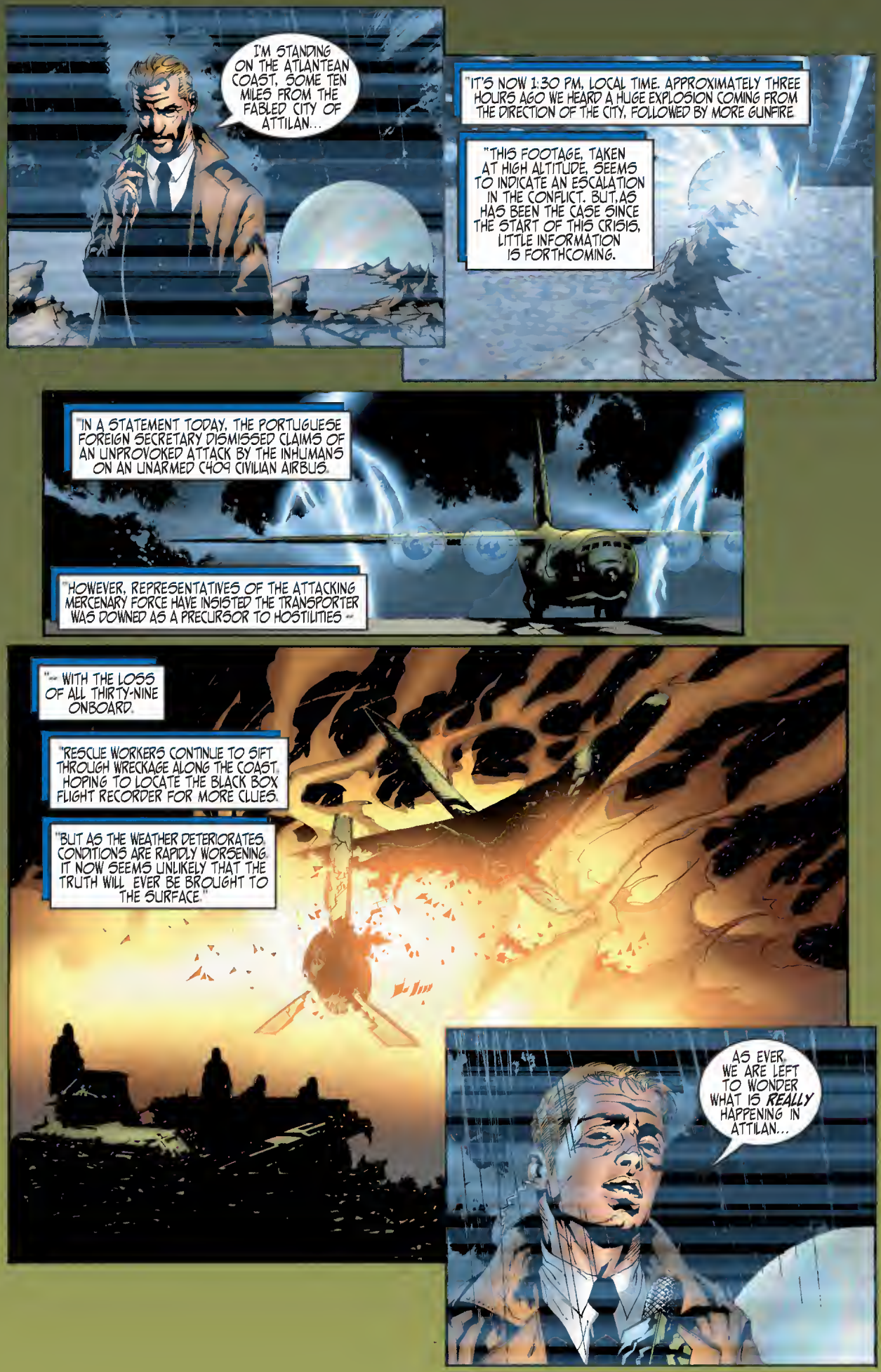

THE PRINCE HAS FASHIONED A TELEPATHIC BARRIER -- POSSIBLY TO PROTECT HIS UNHINGED MIND FROM THE REALITY OF HIS SITUATION. I CANNOT PENETRATE IT.
I FEAR HIS INTELLECT IS SO DISEASED THAT HE CAN NO LONGER DISTINGUISH TRUTH FROM FICTION. HE BELIEVES ALL OF HIS DELUSIONS TO BE REAL, AND ALL OF HIS LIES TO BE TRUE.


HUhh... HEhh... WELL, WHAT CAN I SAY SEEKER?
I ALWAYS TELL THE TRUTH.


WHAT NEWS, GORGON?
IT IS MUCH THE SAME AS BEFORE.
I URGE YOU TO RECONSIDER THIS COURSE OF INACTION, BLACK BOLT. WE MUST ATTACK, IF ONLY TO DEFEND OURSELVES.
THE HUMAN WEAPONS ARE LARGELY INEFFECTIVE, BUT FATIGUE IS TAKING ITS TOLL.
I DON'T KNOW HOW MUCH LONGER OUR TELEKINETICS CAN MAINTAIN THE INTEGRITY OF THE BARRIER.
WHY WON'T YOU TURN YOUR POWER ON THESE HUMAN INVADERS, KING BLACK BOLT? WHY DON'T YOU DRIVE THEM BACK INTO THE SEA?
WHAT ARE YOU SO AFRAID OF?

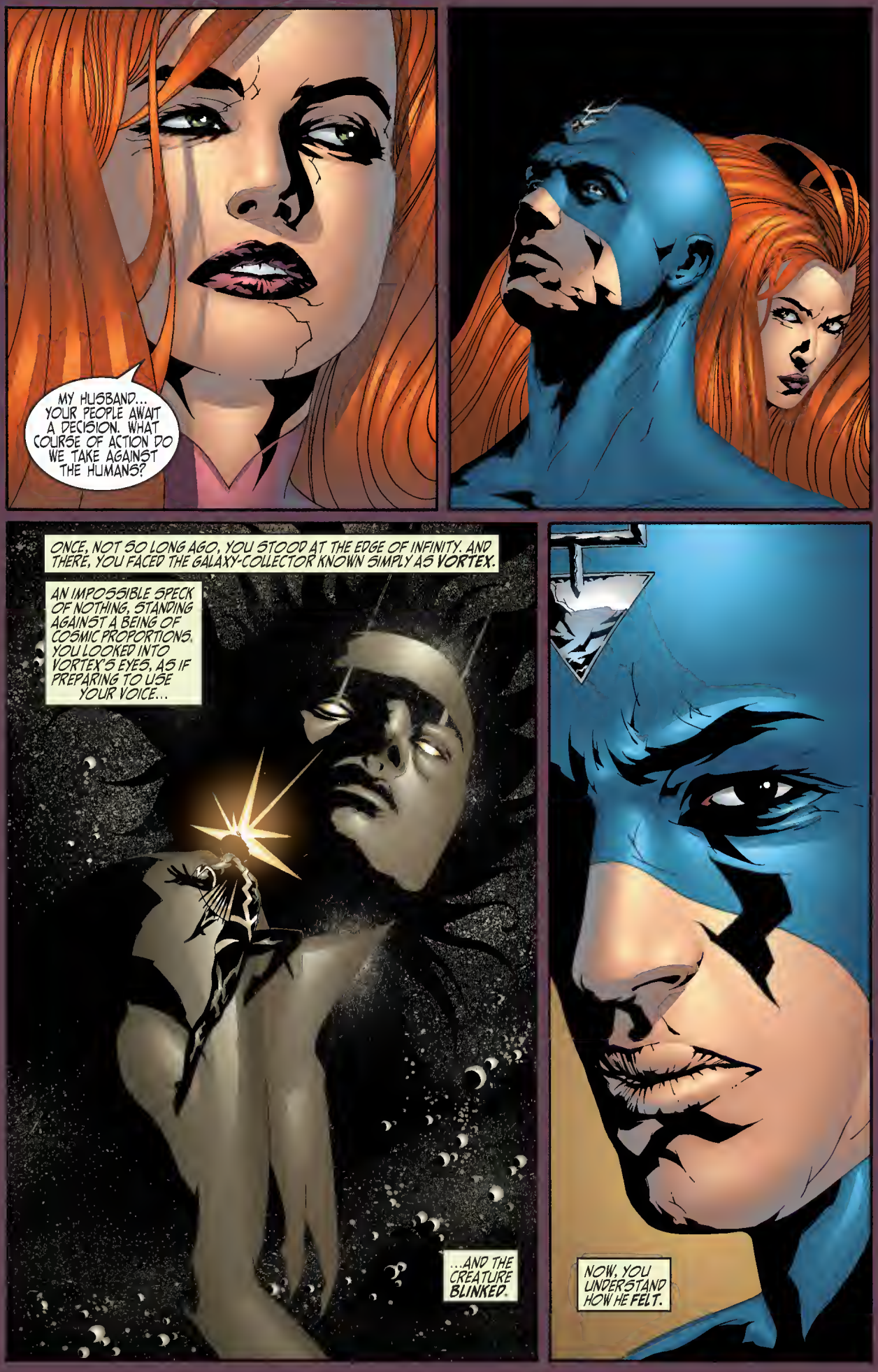

HOW CAN YOU, OF ALL BEINGS, BE AFRAID? DID YOU NOT DEFEAT IKARUS THE ETERNAL IN HAND-TO-HAND COMBAT?
DID YOU NOT ALSO DEFEAT THE COSMIC SPHYNX, WHO TRIED TO MERGE THE WORLDMIND INTO ONE GIANT CONSCIOUSNESS?
THAT DECISIVE VICTORY WAS NOTHING TO YOU.
BUT THESE HUMANS... THE SITUATION IS ENTIRELY MORE COMPLEX. TO FIGHT BACK WOULD BE TO INVITE OTHERS INTO THE CONFLICT... MORE HUMANS TO TAINT THE AIR AROUND YOU.
IF YOU CAN'T USE YOUR POWER, WHAT CAN YOU DO?
WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU DO NOTHING?


...AND WE'VE BEEN CATCHING ALL THE INFORMATION ABOUT THE BATTLE ON OUR VIDS, TONAJA.
TRY TO VISIT WITH YOUR BROTHER SOMETIME... HE'S TERRIBLY WORRIED ABOUT HIS BIG SISTER.
AS ARE WE ALL, MY DARLING. PLEASE... TRY TO BE AS CAREFUL AS YOU CAN. AND ALWAYS REMEMBER: YOUR GRANDMOTHER LOVES YOU --
VID, OFF!
TUHNN -- UHH... JUH...
WOZ?


I'M STANDING ON THE ATLANTEAN COAST, SOME TEN MILES FROM THE FABLED CITY OF ATTILAN...
"IT'S NOW 1:30 PM, LOCAL TIME. APPROXIMATELY THREE HOURS AGO WE HEARD A HUGE EXPLOSION COMING FROM THE DIRECTION OF THE CITY, FOLLOWED BY MORE GUNFIRE.
"THIS FOOTAGE, TAKEN AT HIGH ALTITUDE, SEEMS TO INDICATE AN ESCALATION IN THE CONFLICT. BUT, AS HAS BEEN THE CASE SINCE THE START OF THIS CRISIS, LITTLE INFORMATION IS FORTHCOMING.
"IN A STATEMENT TODAY, THE PORTUGUESE FOREIGN SECRETARY DISMISSED CLAIMS OF AN UNPROVOKED ATTACK BY THE INHUMANS ON AN UNARMED C409 CIVILIAN AIRBUS.
"HOWEVER, REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ATTACKING MERCENARY FORCE HAVE INSISTED THE TRANSPORTER WAS DOWNED AS A PRECURSOR TO HOSTILITIES --
"-- WITH THE LOSS OF ALL THIRTY-NINE ONBOARD.
"RESCUE WORKERS CONTINUE TO SIFT THROUGH WRECKAGE ALONG THE COAST, HOPING TO LOCATE THE BLACK BOX FLIGHT RECORDER FOR MORE CLUES.
"BUT AS THE WEATHER DETERIORATES, CONDITIONS ARE RAPIDLY WORSENING. IT NOW SEEMS UNLIKELY THAT THE TRUTH WILL EVER BE BROUGHT TO THE SURFACE."
AS EVER, WE ARE LEFT TO WONDER WHAT IS *REALLY* HAPPENING IN ATTILAN...


BA-KOOM
WHERE DID YOU GO?
BA-KOOM
BA-KOOM
WHERE DID YOU GO?
WHY DID YOU LEAVE ME?

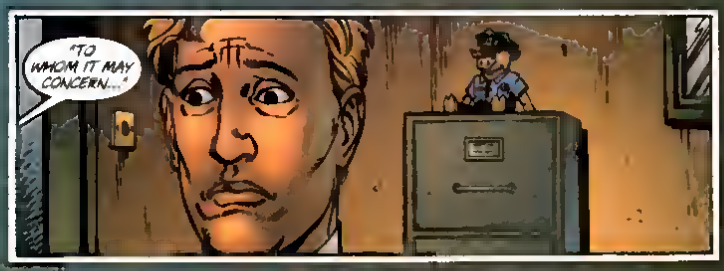

NNNUhh... NO HIT WOZ! NO HIT WOZ!
Oh, WOZ... Oh, THERE, THERE... DON'T CRY.
I KNOW YOU DIDN'T MEAN IT.
YOU SEE WHAT THEY'VE MADE ME DO, WOZ? THEY'RE THE ONES WHO'VE HURT YOU, NOT I.
THEY CAST US OUT... THROWN US TO THE WOLVES, ALL BECAUSE THEY'RE AFRAID OF US. IT MAKES ME SO ANGRY I CAN HARDLY THINK. I'M TRYING TO HELP THEM. BUT THEY WON'T LISTEN TO ME.
WHY DON'T YOU CARE? DO YOU REALLY WANT TO KILL US ALL? THERE'S A FLAW. DO YOU HEAR?
A FLAW!
Hhhh...; BUT THEY'LL PAY FOR THEIR HUBRIS, WON'T THEY, WOZ?
WE'LL MAKE THEM PAY...


MY HUSBAND... YOUR PEOPLE AWAIT A DECISION. WHAT COURSE OF ACTION DO WE TAKE AGAINST THE HUMANS?
ONCE, NOT SO LONG AGO, YOU STOOD AT THE EDGE OF INFINITY. AND THERE, YOU FACED THE GALAXY-COLLECTOR KNOWN SIMPLY AS VORTEX.
AN IMPOSSIBLE SPECK OF NOTHING, STANDING AGAINST A BEING OF COSMIC PROPORTIONS. YOU LOOKED INTO VORTEX'S EYES, AS IF PREPARING TO USE YOUR VOICE...
...AND THE CREATURE BLINKED.
NOW, YOU UNDERSTAND HOW HE FELT.

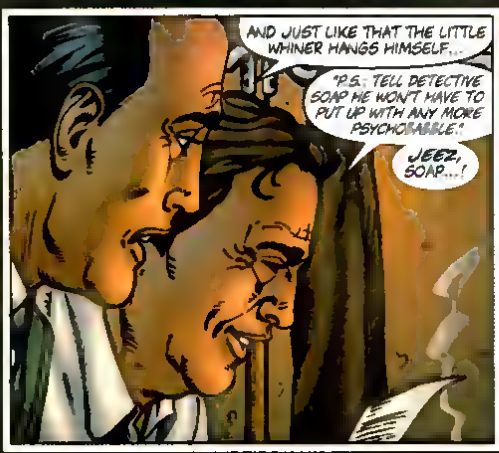

WHEN YOU LOOK OUT OVER ATTILAN, THE REASONS FOR YOUR INACTION BECOME CLEAR.
THE CITY IS A COLLECTION OF VIBRANT SOULS, REFLECTIVE OF THEIR UNIQUE HISTORY. A GREAT REFUGE THAT MUST BE KEPT INTACT AT ALL COSTS.
YOUR SUBJECTS RELY ON YOU, TO PROTECT AND NURTURE THEM. BUT YOU'RE NOT JUST PROTECTING THEIR SAFETY, ARE YOU?
YOU'RE PROTECTING THEIR VERY IDENTITY.
IF YOU HARM A SINGLE HUMAN, OTHERS WILL BE DRAWN INTO THE CONFLICT. THE MORE HUMANS WHO COME TO ATLANTIS, THE MORE YOU RUN THE RISK OF CONTAMINATION.
CONTACT WITH THE OUTSIDERS WOULD BE AN INCURABLE DISEASE, STRIKING AT THE HEART OF YOUR SOCIAL ORDER. IT WOULD BRING YOUR ANCIENT CITY DOWN.
THAT IS WHY YOU CANNOT FIGHT BACK.
MY LORD... YOUR DECISION?


COUSIN KARNAK, YOU ARE TO ASSIST ME. A DECISION HAS BEEN REACHED. WE ADDRESS THE HIGH COUNCIL IMMEDIATELY.
BUT WHAT *ORDERS*, MY LADY? WHAT NEWS FROM OUR KING?
KING BLACK BOLT HAS GIVEN THE ORDER TO *RETREAT*.


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"TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN..."


"ALL MY LIFE I HAVE FACED REJECTION IN ITS MANY FORMS. FROM THE FIRST CRUEL TAUNTS OF THE KINDERGARTEN BULLIES WHOSE EXACTING SOCIAL STANDARDS I COULD NOT HOPE TO MEET; TO THE LATEST IN A LONG LINE OF SHOOT-DOWNS FROM A SERIES OF WOMEN EACH MORE DOWDY THAN THE LAST, NOWHERE HAVE I FOUND THE SIMPLE SENSE OF BELONGING THAT I CRAVE
"AT LAST I ENTERED THE FIELD OF PSYCHOLOGY, CERTAIN THAT I COULD SOLVE MY PROBLEM THROUGH STUDY. IF I COULD IDENTIFY THE REASON OTHERS SPURN MY COMPANY, THEN SURELY I COULD ACT UPON IT. ALAS THIS WAS NOT TO BE.
"AND YET I HOPED AT LEAST TO USE THE SKILLS I HAD LEARNED TO HELP OTHERS. AND PERHAPS BY DOING SO ACHIEVE SOME MEASURE OF POPULARITY...
BLAH-BLAH, "FIRST ASSIGNMENT" BLAH-BLAH, "THREW MYSELF INTO THE WORK" "ONE FINAL AND TERRIBLE REJECTION" YADDA-YADDA-YADDA... COME ON, GET TO THE POINT -- OKAY "DECIDED TO SEEK THE WARMTH SO LONG DENIED TO ME IN LIFE WITHIN THE HALLS OF ETERNITY INSTEAD TRY TO THINK OF ME WITH KINDNESS. SOMETIMES -- BUD PLUGG"


AND JUST LIKE THAT THE LITTLE WHINER HANGS HIMSELF...
"P.S.: TELL DETECTIVE SOAP HE WON'T HAVE TO PUT UP WITH ANY MORE PSYCHOBABBLE."
JEEZ, SOAP...!


WHAT DID YOU SAY TO THIS GUY?



STAN LEE PRESENTS

WILD KINGDOM

GARTH ENNIS STORY STEVE DILLON PENCILS JIMMY PALMIOTTI INKS
CHRIS SOTOMAYOR COLORS RICHARD STARKINGS & COMICRAFT'S WES ABBOTT LETTERS
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I'M SCOPING OUT MA GNUCCI FOR THE KILL, GETTING A LOOK AT HER SECURITY TEAM. AND I'VE FOLLOWED THEM THROUGH HALF THE STORES ON FIFTH AVENUE WHEN ONE OF HER SOLDIERS MAKES ME
AND I WASN'T EVEN GOING TO HIT HER TONIGHT
THE LIMO MEETS THEM AT THE PARK AND THIS LITTLE PUNK, THIS BLUE-EYED BOY PROBABLY ON HIS FIRST TIME GUARDING THE WITCH, HE TURNS AND JUST LIKE THAT HE LOOKS RIGHT AT ME
HE LOOKS IN MY EYES AND DOESN'T LIKE WHAT HE SEES AND SOMETHING TELLS HIM. THIS IS IT.
HE'S A BRIGHT KID. HE SHOULD GO FAR.
I HAVE A FORTY-FIVE
HE HAS A SUBMACHINE GUN


MY NIGHT GOES DOWNHILL FROM THERE
IT'S HIM! THE PUNISHER! SHOOT HIM DOWN!
KILLED MY SONS! HE KILLED MY BROTHER!
I WANT HIS HEAD!
YES, MRS. GNUCCI!


Y! DONE REAL GOOD THERE, KID! MA'S GONNA BE REAL PLEASED!
YEAH, JUNIOR, WAY TO IMPRESS THE BOSS...!
COME ON!
THIS'LL LEAD US RIGHT TO HIM! MOVE!
HEY... YOU THINK...?
HE'S IN HERE, ALL RIGHT.
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HIM AN' THE OTHER ANIMALS.
LET'S TAKE HIM.


KILLER...
KILLER...
SSSSSS
RIP BUD PLUGG
DET. SOAP
KILLER...
HA HAHAHA HAHA
COULDN'T THEY AT LEAST HAVE GOTTEN RID OF THE TIE?


ANY SIGN?
I DON'T SEE NO MORE BLOOD...
OKAY, SPREAD OUT! I'LL CHECK IN HERE!
MINUTE YOU SEE HIM -- START SHOOTIN'!
ONE IN THE SHOULDER WENT THROUGH THE MEAT. OTHER ONE TOOK A CHUNK OF RIB WITH IT. THAT'S THE KILLER
JUST HAD THE PISTOL WITH ME. WASN'T PLANNING ON ANYTHING MAJOR
ALL I'VE GOT IS WHAT COMES TO HAND AND A WORLD OF HURT TO USE UP ON THE FIRST GOOMBAH TO COME THROUGH THAT DOOR
THANK YOU, GOD.


THE ONE WHO MADE ME...
THE BLUE-EYED BOY.
ALREADY THINKING ABOUT HIS REWARD
HE'LL NEVER GUESS.
BELIEVE ME.
MOMMY


HNNNK!
IN A PLACE LIKE THIS, WHAT COMES TO HAND DEPENDS ON YOUR [illegible]TION
ALWAYS DID LIKE THE ZOO.
YOU HEAR SOMETHIN' FROM IN THERE?
MAYBE WE OUGHTA CHECK ON THE KID...


I WANTED THAT HK OF HIS. BUT THESE ARE THE BREAKS.
EAT UP, GUYS.
I HAVEN'T GOT ALL NIGHT.
RIGHT ON CUE...
KID! KID, YOU IN THERE?
YOU OKAY?
C'MON, KID, QUIT MESSIN' AROUND...!
WHERE'S HE -- NO!
OH, JEEZ
BOOOOAAAKK


BLUCCCHH! BOOAAAKK!
THERE! THERE HE GOES!
BAKOOMM
BAKOOMM
BAKOOMM
YOU EVIL FREAKIN' SCUM! YOU ARE DEAD!
WHO LIVES IN THERE, I WONDER?
...AH.
YOU'RE UP, BIG GUY.
I'M COMIN' FOR YOU, PUNISHER!
W-W-WAIT UP -- I CAN'T--
I'M COMIN' TO BLOW YOUR FREAKIN' HEAD OFF!


AAAAH! NO!
NNOOOOOHAAAARRRGGHH!
WHAT IS IT? WHAT'S WRONG
FOR CRYIN' OUT LOUD, TALK TO ME ...
WHAT ARE YOU IDIOTS DOING IN HERE?
AAAAAIIIIEEEEEE!


DETECTIVE SOAP? LIEUTENANT VON RICHTHOFEN. CALL ME MOLLY.
I'M THE FIRST PIECE OF LUCK YOU'VE HAD ALL DAY.
UH...?
OR ALL YOUR LIFE BY THE LOOK OF THINGS. MIND IF I SMOKE?
HER #14
WELL... I DON'T...
MANY THANKS.
YOU'RE THE DEPARTMENT'S BIGGEST LOSER AND I'M ITS BIGGEST EMBARRASSMENT. WE'VE BOTH BEEN GIVEN IMPOSSIBLE JOBS.
WANT TO PROVE EVERYBODY WRONG, CRACK BOTH OUR CASES, AND THEN TAKE OVER THE WORLD?


I... I...
WELL, NOT THE TAKING OVER THE WORLD THING, THAT'S A JOKE. BUT I MEANT THE REST.
RIGHT.
SORRY, I'M HAVING TROUBLE KEEPING UP. THE DEPARTMENT'S BIGGEST EMBARRASSMENT?
REFUSED TO SLEEP WITH THE COMMISSIONER.
AT A PRESS CONFERENCE. DIDN'T KNOW I WAS IN RANGE OF THE MIC.
AHHH, YOU'RE THAT MOLLY VON RICHTHOFEN...!
AS A SPECIAL THANK YOU, HE ASSIGNED ME TO TAKE DOWN THE GNUCCI FAMILY.
WHICH IS OF COURSE A FARCE OF MONUMENTAL PROPORTIONS. HALF OF CITY HALL IS IN BED WITH THE GNUCCIS, NOT TO MENTION THE DEPARTMENT ITSELF. MEANWHILE -- AND THIS MAY SOUND FAMILIAR -- I AM A TASK FORCE OF ONE.
NOW, YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE CATCHING THE PUNISHER, WHO IS CURRENTLY WORKING HIS WAY THROUGH THE GNUCCIS LIKE A KNIFE THROUGH BUTTER...
YOU'RE SAYING USE ONE AGAINST THE OTHER?
VON RICHTHOFEN AND SOAP: THE MOST TITANIC TEAM-UP OF ALL TIME.


HAVE TO CLOSE THIS DOWN SOON.
LOST MORE BLOOD THAN I THOUGHT. AND ALL THAT SHOOTING'S BOUND TO BRING COPS.
MA JOINING IN JUST MAKES THE PROBLEM WORSE.
DID YOU THINK YOU HAD ALL NIGHT OR SOMETHING, MORON? IS THAT WHY YOU WERE PLAYING AT NATURE-STUDY?
B-B-BUT THE GUYS --
THEY'RE DEAD, YOU CRETIN. FORGET THEM.
I WANT THE PUNISHER. I WANT TO SEE HIM DEAD WITH MY OWN EYES...
THERE! THERE, DAMN YOU!
DHBUDDABUDDABUDDAB
OH, CAN'T YOU DO ANYTHING RIGHT?!


UNNNH!
GREAT.
I NEEDED THAT.
COME ON, HE'S WOUNDED! HE CAN'T GET FAR! AND SHOOT STRAIGHT THIS TIME!
DAMN SNAKE TOOK THE LAST PUNK'S GUN.
NOTHING IN HERE I CAN USE AS A
WEAPON...

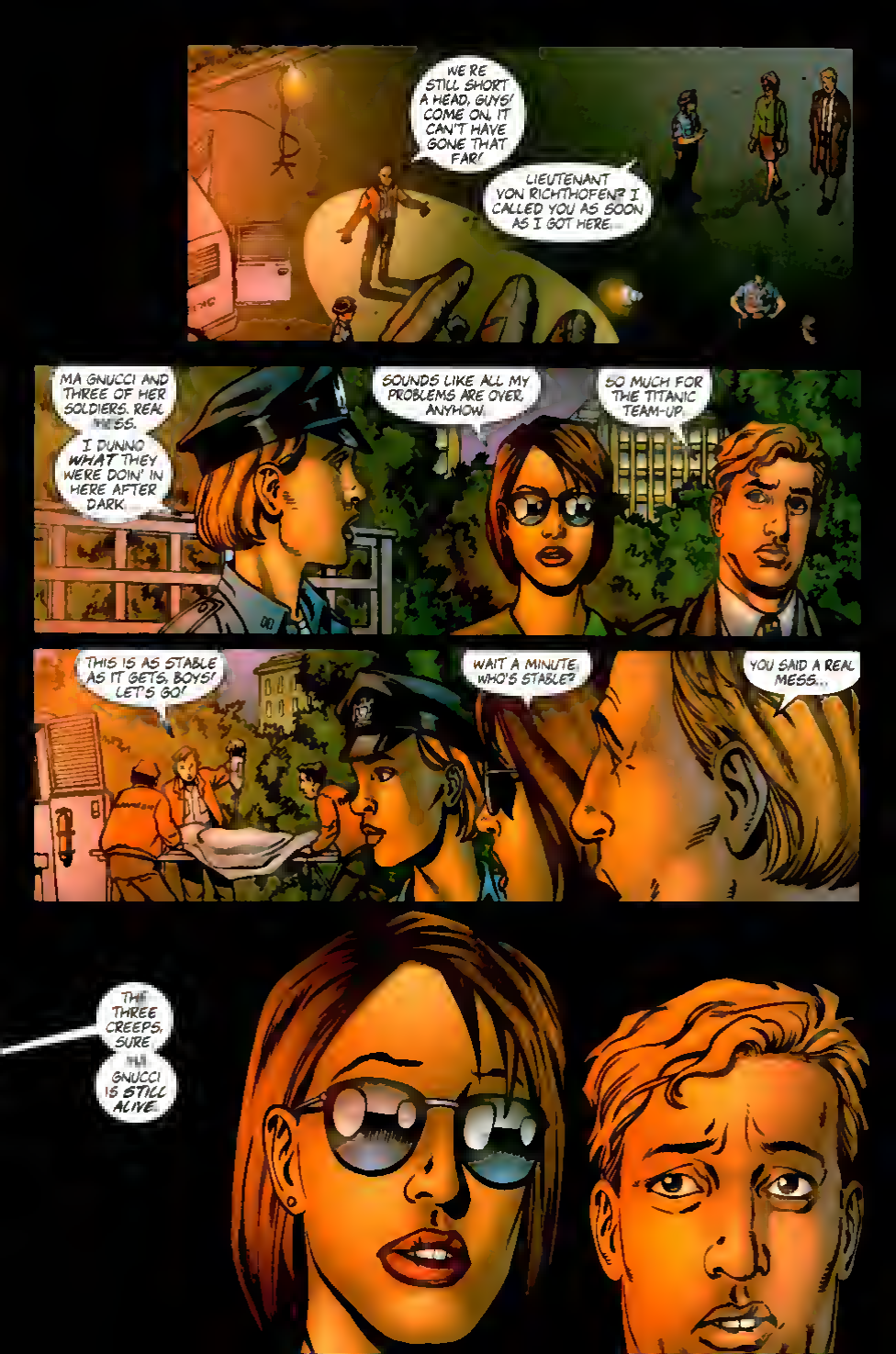

B-BUT MRS. GNUCCI --
DID I TELL YOU TO SPEAK? GET IN THERE! BE READY TO HELP ME DOWN!
RRRR..?
CUDDLY.
LOVABLE.
DOCILE.
THAT WON'T DO AT ALL
AAAOOW...!
STOP WHINING, IMBECILE! I'M ALMOST --
AAAAAHH!


HEY!
WELL, DON'T JUST STAND THERE! THERE HE IS!
GET HIM!
RRRRRRRRRR!
IT'S BEARS.


WHIRR
LET'S JUST PAUSE TO SAVOR THE MOMENT...
NO! GET AWAY FROM ME! GET AWAY!
RRRRRRRRRR!
OH, YES. ONE OF THE GREATS.
AAAAAIIEEE!
SIRENS COMING. GOT TO GO.
SHAME.


WHY, LORD -- GOD --?
WHY?
WHY HAST THOU FORSAKEN MEEEEE...?
WITH YOUR STRENGTH I COULD HAVE FOUGHT THIS MADNESS, THIS SICKNESS OF THE SOUL THAT PLAGUES ME -- BUT YOU WOULD NOT ANSWER, LORD! YOU IGNORED MY PLEAS, AND NOW I HAVE COMMITTED MURDER! SEVERAL TIMES!
COULD YOU NOT HAVE SENT A SIGN? SOMETHING ANYTHING, JUST TO SHOW ME WHICH COURSE TO TAKE?
-UMF-


?
ANOTHER GNUCCI DOWN
TAGGED AND BAGGED...DINO GNUCCI IS ZIPPED UP
PUNISHER DOES IT AGAIN
A BUGLE EXCLUSIVE BY KEN
The man known as the Punisher continued his bloody vendetta against Brooklyn's Gnucci family last night, as youngest brother Dino was to death
to death by the known as the Pun continued his bloody vendetta against
Gnu
PUNISHER..?
WHO IS THIS MAN?
LET'S SEE...
OH, LORD THANK YOU. THANK YOU. NOW I
I AM NO LONGER ALONE..!


WE'RE STILL SHORT A HEAD, GUYS! COME ON, IT CAN'T HAVE GONE THAT FAR!
LIEUTENANT VON RICHTHOFEN? I CALLED YOU AS SOON AS I GOT HERE...
MA GNUCCI AND THREE OF HER SOLDIERS. REAL MESS.
I DUNNO WHAT THEY WERE DOIN' IN HERE AFTER DARK.
SOUNDS LIKE ALL MY PROBLEMS ARE OVER, ANYHOW.
SO MUCH FOR THE TITANIC TEAM-UP.
THIS IS AS STABLE AS IT GETS, BOYS! LET'S GO!
WAIT A MINUTE. WHO'S STABLE?
YOU SAID A REAL MESS...
THE THREE CREEPS, SURE
GNUCCI IS STILL ALIVE.


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DUCK TIME





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Shhkkk
KAPP
KAPP


KRETAAKT
BRAKKT


KERAK
SLASH
BAPK!


HAHAHA!
KEERASSH
HA HA HA HA
HAHA
HAHA!
KLAANG
KLAANG
KLAANG
HAHAHA
HAHAHA


BRRAAKK


Now, I remind you, that was a White House party. OCP parties RARELY have knife fights.
Well, other than that thing with Moynihan...
I was trying to calculate DUCK TIME –
– the length of time I should wait before coming out of hiding.
Wait too long, you're a wuss. Come out too SOON, and you're LUNCH.
I clocked in at about 6.5 seconds.
Which, I suppose, was way too long...
BUT I'M GETTING AHEAD OF MYSELF.


The story thus far:
With the client at least momentarily deposed by a coup d'etat, and the White House suffering a severe case of Head-In-Butt-Crack disease, the decade-overdue White House reception for King T'Challa of Wakanda became an elegant evening at the New York Hilton which the president had to miss due to pressing matters of state
With an election a little more than a year away, it was good politics to do something nice for the African-American community.
And, had I been in charge of the guest list and not the White House, I might have actually INVITED some of them.
Outside of the king and his entourage, there wasn't another black person at the ball who wasn't carrying a TRAY.
STAN LEE PRESENTS: THE BLACK PANTHER
HUNTED
CHRISTOPHER PRIEST STORY JOE JUSKO GUEST ARTIST
AVALON STUDIOS COLORS
RICHARD STARKINGS AND COMICRAFT LETTERS
NANCI OAKESIAN MANAGING EDITOR
JOE QUESADA AND JIMMY PALMIOTTI EDITORS
BOB HARRAS CHIEF
Nothing a quick call to Spike Lee's casting director couldn't fix, though. Half an hour later, we were a Benneton ad.
Everett K.Ross: LORD of 'Plan B'

LAST TANGO IN WAKANDA




HARDLY WORTHY OF REPRESENTING OUR PEOPLE...
LET ME SEE HER TEETH.
SHE IS STRONG AND OF GOOD STOCK.
SEND HER TO MY QUARTERS. SHE HAS MUCH TO LEARN.
IN THREE SUMMERS I PRESENT HER TO THE KING.
WHAT ARE YOU CALLED?
SPEAK -- WE ARE ALONE.
...NAKIA...
WELCOME TO MY HOME BELOVED.
DO NOT BE AFRAID -- THE ROLE OF THE DORA MILAJE IS MERELY CEREMONIAL.
YOUR KING SHALL NOT MAKE DEMANDS OF YOU.
STAY OR LEAVE OF YOUR OWN FREE WILL.


The client told me he'd actually KISSED her during one of Mephisto's mind games.
I burst into FLAMES at even the THOUGHT of it.
Fat kid. Ice cream. Keep up with me.
The client, however, had eyes for only ONE woman...
... MONICA ...
MONICA LYNNE was a local jazz singer.
OCP has VIDEO of an address the client made to his nation some time ago.
Babe-O-Rama and, unlike the Milaje, old enough to buy cigarettes.
TODAY I ANNOUNCE MY BETROTHAL TO MONICA LYNNE, WHOM I HAVE ASKED TO BE MY WIFE --
-- AND WHO SHALL BECOME YOUR QUEEN.
Mephisto sent the client through a series of TIME SHIFTS --
-- ending at an AWKWARD moment.
-- ?!? NAKIA --?
HAVE... HAVE I DISPLEASED YOU, MY KING --?
HIM, yes.
The only way she could've disappointed ME was to stop BREATHING.
Anything upwards of a PULSE, I'd find extremely entertaining.
We didn't know what had actually BECOME of that engagement to Monica Lynne --


-- but I think it's safe to say there were no shortage of women waiting to serve this guy absolutely ANYTHING on the menu.
Which, of course, did WONDERS for my inferiority complex and self-loathing.
I was waiting for YOU to rescue me, Nikki, but I couldn't FIND you anywhere...
WHEN HER DADDY WAS DRAGGING BLACK MEN BEHIND HIS WAGON, I'M CERTAIN THIS WAS THE LAST THING EITHER OF THEM EXPECTED TO SEE
KAMAL -- LEAVE HIM ALONE --
SHUT UP, NIKKI --
-- THIS IS ABOUT BROTHERS.
I SHOULD RESPECT YOU I WANT TO ADMIRE YOU.
BUT NOT WITH YOUR FACE PRESSED UP AGAINST THE ENEMY.
KERAKK




T'CHALLA -- ARE YOU -- ARE YOU ALL RIGHT --?!
-- T'CHALLA -- ?
THE STUDENTS... THEY FEAR ME...
GOOD.
AND THIS WORLD OF SKIN COLOR...
A LAND OF IGNORANT FOOLS, LORD KING, AS IS MUCH OF THE GLOBE.
YOUR FATHER WISELY KEPT THE REALM APART FROM SUCH PEOPLES... A DIVISION NOT OF RACE BUT OF CHARACTER.
YOUR FATHER WOULD DISAPPROVE OF THIS DALLIANCE NOT BECAUSE THE GIRL IS WHITE --
-- BUT BECAUSE SHE IS NOT OF THE REALM.


CLAP CLAP CLAP CLAP CLAP CLAP CLAP CLAP CLAP
And who KNEW he could TANGO -- ?
CLAP CLAP CLAP CLAP CLAP CLAP CLAP
CLAP CLAP CLAP CLAP
< BELOVED... WE MUST SPEAK... >
KING T'CHALLA -- EXCUSE ME FOR INTERRUPTING --
-- BUT IT'S BEEN A VERY LONG TIME
AND I OWE YOU A LONG-OVERDUE APOLOGY
DON'T BE RIDICULOUS SENATOR RAKIM
-- ?! I'M IMPRESSED, YOUR HIGHNESS AFTER ALL --
-- IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME SINCE COLLEGE
I KNOW THE NAMES OF ALL U.S. SENATORS AND CONGRESSMEN SENATOR
IT'S STILL KAMAL, YOUR HIGHNESS
AND I AM STILL T'CHALLA KAMAL
YOU KNOW NIKKI IS WITH OCP NOW -- SAW HER HERE A MINUTE AGO --


I WAS WONDERING WHAT YOU'D PLANNED TO *SAY* TO THEM.
"THEM"?
AH. FOLLOW ME.
THE WHITE HOUSE WANTED THIS DINNER TO GET A LOT OF PUBLICITY -- BUT ONLY THE *RIGHT KIND*.
INVITED *ME* MOSTLY AS AN *AFTER-THOUGHT*.
THE WHITE HOUSE THINKS I'M OUT HERE IN A *DASHIKI* PLAYING GIL SCOTT-HERON RECORDS AND THROWING *DARTS* AT POSTERS OF PAT BUCHANAN.
THEY'RE *RIGHT*.
SO, WHEN I NOTICED THEY HADN'T INVITED ANY *ACTUAL* BLACK PEOPLE TO THE *FIRST* OFFICIAL RECEPTION THIS COUNTRY'S EVER *HAD* FOR A LONG-STANDING AFRICAN MONARCH --
-- I MADE A FEW *PHONE CALLS*.
REGAL
ELAYNE -- THERE'S A CROWD OF BLACK PEOPLE OUTSIDE.
HOW MANY? *ALL* OF THEM.
I WANT *MODEL 8* UP AND RUNNING A HALF HOUR AGO. WAKE UP *EVERYBODY*...


EVERYBODY
WHAT DO YOU WANT? WHY HAVE YOU COME?
TO SEE IF IT WAS TRUE
TO SEE IF YOU WERE REALLY HERE
I DON'T UNDERSTAND. I HAVE ALWAYS BEEN AMONG YOU
YOU WERE WITH THEM --
-- THE AVENGERS -- THE FANTASTIC FOUR THEY DON'T CARE NOTHIN' ABOUT US. THEY NOT OUR HEROES --
-- THEY THEIR HEROES.
OFFICER JUSKO'S DONUTS
-- ? WHOSE HEROES -- ?

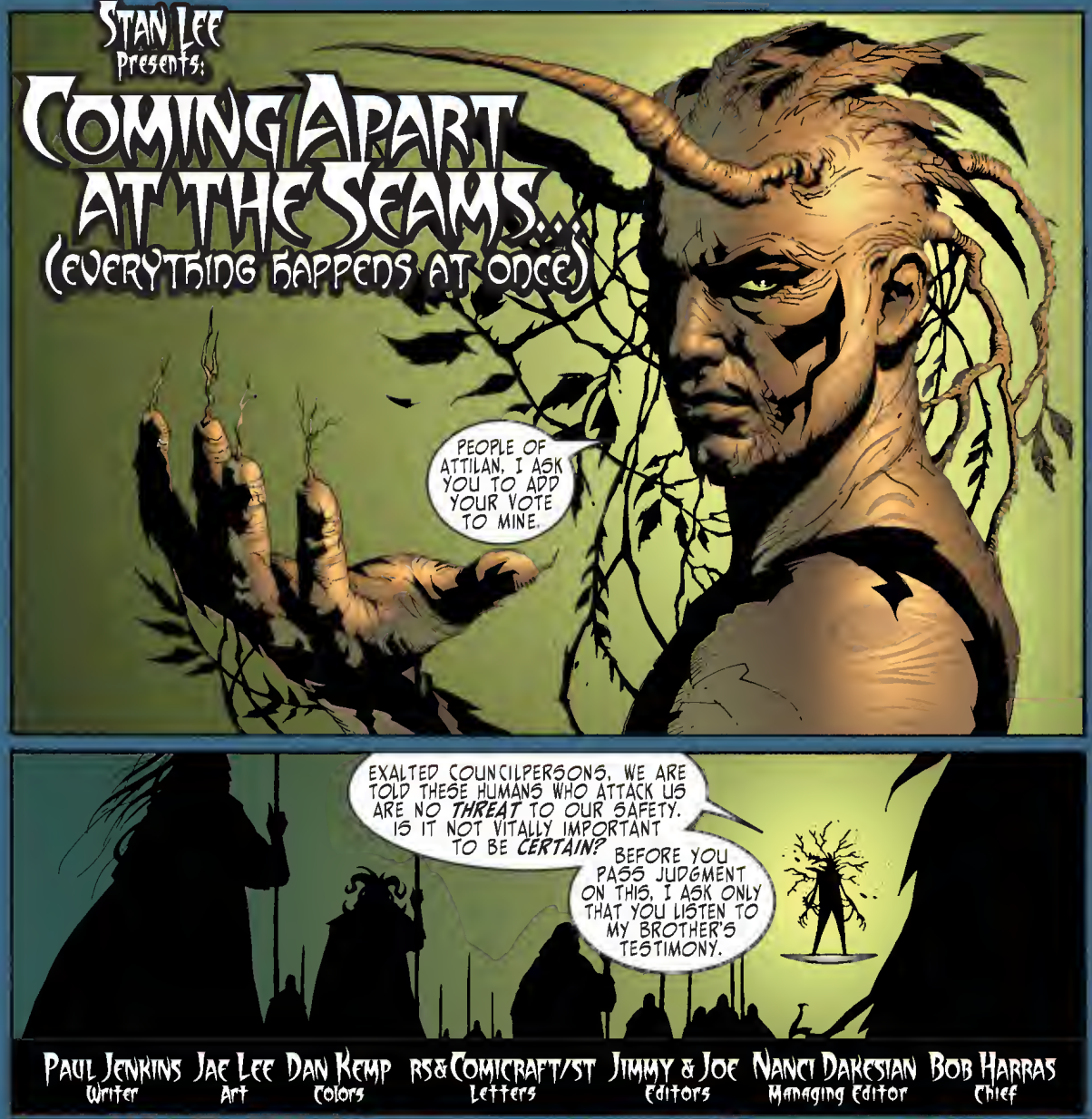

OKAY, ELAYNE -- THE BOYS ARE HERE --!
I WANT THE BIG SHOW, FELLAS -- MAKE SURE THEY CAN SEE THE GUNS BUT BE A PAL AND TRY NOT TO ACTUALLY FIRE THEM.
YOU GUYS ARE OUR BEST CHANCE TO PREVENT A RODNEY KING HERE!
SO -- GO -- GO -- GOHHH!
ESU
GOHHH! GO-- GO--
--?!
ESU
HOLD IT.
YOU'RE OUR HERO -- YOU KNOW HOW WE FEEL!
I AM MERELY A MAN, AS ANY OTHER.
NOT HERE -- NOT IN THIS COUNTRY--
IN ANY COUNTRY -- AMONG ALL PEOPLES! WE SHOULD NOT BECOME POLARIZED BY SELF-INTEREST --
-- BUT EMBRACE OUR COMMON HUMANITY--
YOUR HIGHNESS, IN THE INTEREST OF PUBLIC SAFETY I REALLY MUST INSIST YOU COME WITH US NOW.


ELAYNE --
-- YOU GOTTA BE KIDDING ME.
ELAYNE -- I LOOK MORE LIKE THE CLIENT THAN THIS GUY DOES.
ELAYNE -- DECOY. DEEE COY.
"A PERSON OR OBJECT WHO IS NOT FATTER THAN MEATLOAF --
"-- DESIGNED TO MISDIRECT PUBLIC TTENTION SO I CAN GET THE FRICKEN CLIENT AWAY FROM THE ZULU NATION."
-- WHA -- ? HEY --
HEY!
BIG HAIRY GUY IN PLAYED-OUT 1970'S LENNY KRAVITZ LION GET-UP -- !
WATCH THE TUX -- IT'S A RENTAL --!
FOLLOW ME, SIR --
The SWAT guys weren't actually there to SECURE the area so much as to put on a SHOW.
Which SORT OF explains how I got KIDNAPPED.
The client himself MIGHT have saved me --
-- but he was a little DISTRACTED.
...MONICA...

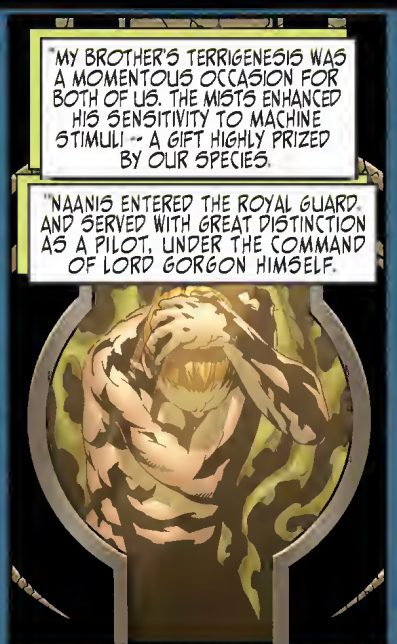

Spotting her distracted him to the point where he actually had to ATTACK his escorts --
-- in order to SAVE their LIVES.
Which, of course, led to the KNIFE FIGHT, and our ultimate capture by --
-- ALYOSHA KRAVINOV --
-- KRAVEN THE HUNTER!
NEXT:
CAGED!
WE SET ROSS ON FIRE AND THROW HIM OUT A WINDOW -- WHAT MORE COULD YOU WANT?


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THIS IS I: REXEL TOIVEN, SON OF URSICUS, SON OF BELIAL.
I IS NO ONE OF IMPORTANCE.
HERE IS WHERE I LIVES -- DARKWARD END OF ATTILAN, IN SHADOW OF GREAT SPIRES. PEOPLES LIKE I LIVES HERE, WHO IS NOT USEFUL TO OUR GREAT SOCIETY.
WE IS MOST LUCKY, I AGREE. BETTER THIS THAN LIVE UNDER CITY IN SUBSTRUCTURE. THERE, ALPHA PRIMITIVES IS LIVING, UNGRATEFUL WRETCHES.
HERE IS SPECIAL PICTURE OF PARENTS -- STRONG AND PROUD. FATHER IS ROYAL GUARD, MOTHER IS TELEPATH. THIS IS A LONG TIME AGO, WHEN PARENTS LOVES ME.
BUT I DO NOT SEE THEM FOR MANY YEARS. BECAUSE I COME BAD FROM TERRIGEN MISTS AND MAKE GREAT SADNESS FOR THEM.
HERE IS I SENT TO LIVE AND WORKS. I USE BLESSED POWER TO DRAW ON SKIN, CREATE MANY GOOD COLORS.
DO YOU KNOW LORD KARNAKS? HE IS BEST CUSTOMER, COME HERE MANY TIME -- VERY IMPORTANT PERSON!
BODY ART
REXEL TOIVEN PROPRIETOR
YES... VERY IMPORTANT, BUT TODAY, I STANDS AS TALL AS HE, AS ANY CITIZEN, I BELIEVE.
BECAUSE TODAY, I VOTE.


STAN LEE
Presents:
COMING APART AT THE SEAMS...
(EVERYTHING HAPPENS AT ONCE)
PEOPLE OF ATTILAN, I ASK YOU TO ADD YOUR VOTE TO MINE.
EXALTED COUNCILPERSONS, WE ARE TOLD THESE HUMANS WHO ATTACK US ARE NO THREAT TO OUR SAFETY. IS IT NOT VITALLY IMPORTANT TO BE CERTAIN?
BEFORE YOU PASS JUDGMENT ON THIS, I ASK ONLY THAT YOU LISTEN TO MY BROTHER'S TESTIMONY.
PAUL JENKINS Writer
JAE LEE Art
DAN KEMP Colors
RS&COMICRAFT/ST Letters
JIMMY & JOE Editors
NANCI DAKESIAN Managing Editor
BOB HARRAS Chief


"HIS NAME WAS NAANIS AND HE WAS MY TWIN. WHILE AN EVOLUTIONARY IMBALANCE UNLOCKED MY GENO-CODING AND FREED MY ABILITIES AT AN EARLY AGE, WE WERE NONETHELESS EQUALS.
"AS CHILDREN, WE WERE BOISTEROUS, INSEPARABLE. I WAS A MERE TWIG OF A BOY, AND IT WAS NAANIS' FANCY THAT I SHOULD BE CALLED TIMBERIUS -- A NAME I CARRY PROUDLY TO THIS DAY.


"MY BROTHER'S TERRIGENESIS WAS A MOMENTOUS OCCASION FOR BOTH OF US. THE MISTS ENHANCED HIS SENSITIVITY TO MACHINE STIMULI -- A GIFT HIGHLY PRIZED BY OUR SPECIES.
"NAANIS ENTERED THE ROYAL GUARD, AND SERVED WITH GREAT DISTINCTION AS A PILOT, UNDER THE COMMAND OF LORD GORGON HIMSELF.


"UNTIL YESTERDAY, WHEN HE WAS MURDERED BY THE HUMANS."


MY BROTHER NAANIS WAS A TRUE AND LOYAL CITIZEN.
AND, BY THE SAME LAWS HE FOUGHT TO UPHOLD, I CLAIM THE RIGHT OF REVENGE IN HIS NAME.
A LIFE FOR A LIFE, AS IT SHOULD BE.
I SAY WE MUST ANNIHILATE THESE MURDEROUS HUMAN CREATURES WHERE THEY STAND, AND SEND A MESSAGE TO ALL OF THEIR KIND THAT THEIR INTRUSIONS WILL NEVER BE TOLERATED.
PEOPLE OF ATTILAN, WE -- YOUR NEWLY-ELECTED GENETIC COUNCIL -- HAVE HEARD THE CLAIM OF CITIZEN TIMBERIUS, AND JUDGED IT TO BE WITH MERIT. A LIFE MUST BE TAKEN, AS IS THE LAW.
NEVERTHELESS, ANY DECLARATION OF WAR MAY ONLY BE RATIFIED BY REFERENDUM. THIS IS A MATTER OF GRAVE CONCERN TO YOU ALL; A DECISION NOT TO BE ENTERED INTO LIGHTLY.
IN ADDITION, THERE IS ANOTHER VOICE WISHING TO BE HEARD...


IF IT PLEASES THE COUNCIL, MY HUSBAND BLACK BOLT WISHES TO MAKE A REQUEST OF HIS PEOPLE. WE BEG THE INDULGENCE OF ALL CITIZENS, AND ASK THEM TO CHOOSE WISELY AND CAREFULLY.
THE LAWS OF ATTILAN WE UNDERSTAND TO BE IMMUTABLE, HONED TO PERFECTION OVER COUNTLESS THOUSANDS OF YEARS.
IF THE LAW DEMANDS A LIFE BE GIVEN FOR ONE TAKEN, THEN SO BE IT. IT COMPELS US TO RESPECT THE SANCTITY OF LIFE, OR PAY THE ULTIMATE PENALTY.
"AND YET, WHILE WE SHARE THE TERRIBLE BURDEN OF TIMBERIUS' LOSS, WE MUST NOT ALLOW ANGER TO BLIND OUR INTERPRETATION OF THE LAW."
A LIFE MAY BE TAKEN, BUT ONLY THE LIFE OF THE HUMAN SOLDIER RESPONSIBLE FOR NAANIS' DEATH.
TIMBERIUS MUST FIND THAT HUMAN, AND RETURN HIM HERE FOR TRIAL --
FOR TRIAL? BUT... THIS IS PREPOSTEROUS!
NO, TIMBERIUS... ONE LIFE FOR ANOTHER -- THAT IS THE LAW.


EXALTED COUNCILPERSONS, WE CANNOT ALLOW OUR PERSONAL FEELINGS TO STAND IN THE WAY OF A GREATER GOOD. IF WE DO SO, WE RETURN TO THE DARK DAYS OF THE COUNCIL THAT PRECEDED YOU.
TRUE. THE HUMANS HAVE BROKEN THROUGH THE OUTER DEFENSES.
BUT IT WOULD BE *IMPOSSIBLE* FOR THEM TO BREAK THE INNER DEFENSE, MUCH LESS THE NEGATIVE ZONE BARRIER THAT PROTECTS OUR CITY.
YOUR KING ASKS YOU TO STAND FIRM IN YOUR RESOLVE, AND TO LEAVE THE HUMANS UNHARMED. IT IS **VITALLY** IMPORTANT THAT WE ACCEPT THIS BURDEN.
IF WE ATTACK, WHO KNOWS HOW MANY MORE WILL COME TO THE AID OF THEIR KIND? HOW MANY **THOUSANDS** WILL WE BE FORCED TO ANNIHILATE BEFORE IT IS ALL OVER?
BUT LADY MEDUSA, WHY MUST CITIZENS OF ATTILAN BE CONCERNED WITH THE PROTECTION OF HUMANS? ARE THEY NOT LESSER CREATURES THAN WE?
LESSER CREATURES? ISN'T THAT WHAT WE ONCE THOUGHT OF THE ALPHA PRIMITIVES?
ALPHA PRIMITIVES... NASTY AND *DANGEROUS*. I LIKE NOT TO THINK OF THESE CREATURES.
NOT SINCE WHAT HAPPEN TO THAT POOR BOY, WOZ.


IF HUMANS AND ALPHAS IS ALIKE, THEN HUMANS IS *DANGEROUS*. I HAS MUCH CONCERN NOW.
BUT I HONOR WORD OF KING BLACK BOLT, WHO IS GOOD AND TRUE. WHAT IS I TO *DO*?
I KNOW NOT WHY HUMANS COME. THEY ATTACK WITHOUT REASON, AND BLACK BOLT SAY WE DO NOT FIGHT?
THIS IS GREAT LARGE THOUGHT. I DO NOT UNDERSTAND.
PERHAPS WE *WAIT*. PERHAPS *THEN* HUMANS GO AWAY...
NOW WHAT, COLONEL STALYENKO?
NOW, WE *WAIT*.

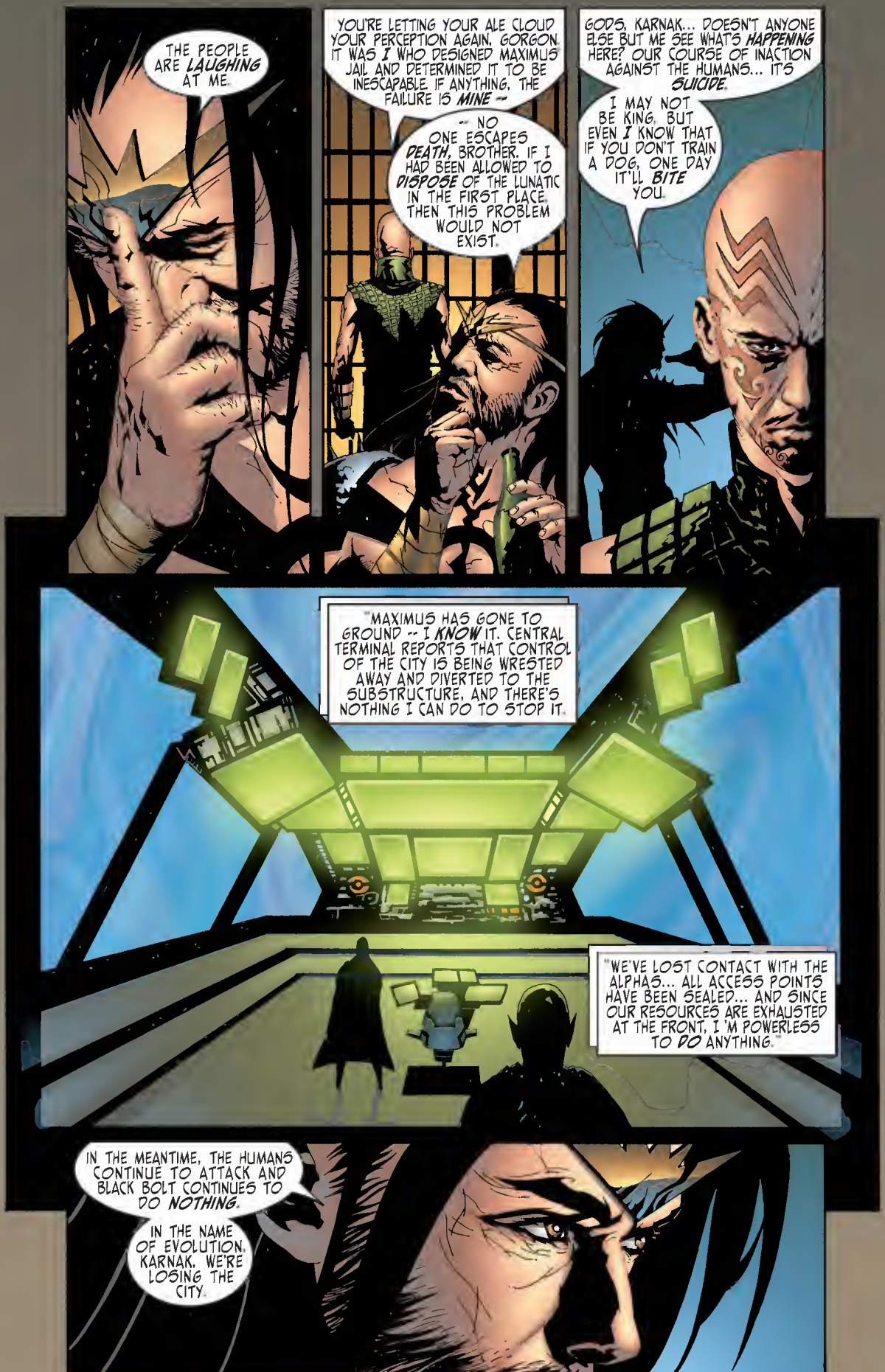

IT IS GREAT HARD THING TO DECIDE, BIG TONEE. IF WE ATTACKS, MORE HUMANS COME TO FIGHT US.
HMPH! LET THEM COME, I SAY. TO!
SLAUGHTER THE FREKKIN' LOT OF 'EM... THAT'LL KEEP THE OTHER BRUTES AWAY.
BUT KING BLACK BOLT, HE MUST BE LISTEN TO. HE PROTECT POOR FOLK LIKE US FROM MANY EVILS BEFORE. REMEMBER? SUCH AS ALPHA TRIKON, AND BAD KING MAXIMUS...
I DEMAND AN EXPLANATION. AND IT'D BETTER BE A GOOD ONE --
IT'S, UH... IT'S LORD MAXIMUS, SIRE. WE'RE NOT SURE HOW IT'S HAPPENED, BUT ALL SORTS OF MISSING ITEMS HAVE SUDDENLY APPEARED IN HIS CELL.
AS TO THE PRINCE HIMSELF, LORD GORGON... UH...
...HE'S GONE.


Oh my brothers. We are kindred spirits... *OUTCASTS*. The refuse of society, made foul abominations by the lies of my cruel sibling, Black Bolt.
Madmen and miscreants we may be, but we can be *UNITED*. Together, we shall break free of the chains of servitude.
Won't that be a lot of fun?
But... we *ARE* free. Are we not free, Prince Maximus?
Look about you... look at what you have *BECOME* -- a slave caste, banished to the shadowy depths of the substructure because your former masters' guilt now outweighs their *NEED* for you.
You call this *FREEDOM?*


THERE *IS* NO FREEDOM IN ATTILAN, Oh MY BROTHERS NOT WHILE THE STRONG ARE EXILED TO MAKE ROOM FOR THE WEAK.
FREEDOM IS *EARNED*, AND EARN IT WE *WILL*. THAT IS WHY MY FELLOW OUTCAST WOZ AND I ARE HERE... TO *HELP* YOU.
Oh, THEY THINK THEY'RE SO *CLEVER*. THEY LAUGH THEMSELVES TO SLEEP IN THEIR SAFE LITTLE BEDS, TO THINK OF US ROTTING IN THIS DANK, STEAMING HOLE.
BUT WE'LL MAKE THEM CHOKE ON THEIR PILLOWS, WON'T WE, Oh MY BROTHERS? WE HAVE THE *POWER*.
"THE ENTIRE SUBSTRUCTURE IS NO LONGER THE PROPERTY OF THOSE ABOVE. AS OF THIS MOMENT, WE ARE AN INDEPENDENT STATE. WE HAVE *SECEDED* FROM ATTILAN.
"TO PROTECT OUR INTERESTS, I HAVE CLOSED OFF ALL ACCESSWAYS BETWEEN OUR WORLD AND THEIRS. THERE IS NO WAY IN, AND NO WAY OUT.
BUT PRINCE MAXIMUS, THIS IS *WRONG*. IT IS WRONG TO FIGHT. IT IS BETTER TO TALK.
Um. WELL, I'M NOT WITHOUT COMPASSION, BROTHER. IF YOU WISH TO GO AND HAVE A CHAT WITH THE KING, YOU ARE WELCOME TO TRY AND *LEAVE*.


LORD MAXIMUS SPEAKS TRUE. HE IS OUR KING. HE HAS COME TO SAVE US --
AH... WHAT A LOVELY GESTURE. BUT IN ALL TRUTH, THE CREDIT FOR YOUR SALVATION FALLS UPON BRAVE AND NOBLE WOZ HERE, WHO HAS COME AS A SAVIOR UNTO YOU.
IT WAS HE WHO SO CLEVERLY FOUND A WAY TO HIDE HIS TRUE IDENTITY FROM THE TERRIGEN INQUISITORS ABOVE -- WITH A LITTLE... NUDGE ON MY PART, OF COURSE.
"IT WAS WOZ WHO HELPED OUR HUMAN ALLIES PLANT THE DEVICE THAT NOW DESTROYS THE NEGATIVE ZONE BARRIER AROUND ATTILAN.
"CAN YOU IMAGINE WHAT'S GOING ON UP THERE? THEY MUST BE GOING POSITIVELY GIDDY WITH FEAR, NOW THAT THE SKY IS FALLING ON THEIR HEADS."
OH MY BROTHERS, IT IS OUR TIME TO REJOICE. WE HAVE BEEN THE MEEK AND THE DOWNTRODDEN FOR TOO LONG.
THEY TAUNTED US AND CALLED US NAMES. THEY SAID WE WERE INSANE.
WELL, LET'S SEE HOW THEY LIKE IT WHEN WE'RE RUNNING THE ASYLUM!
YAAH!

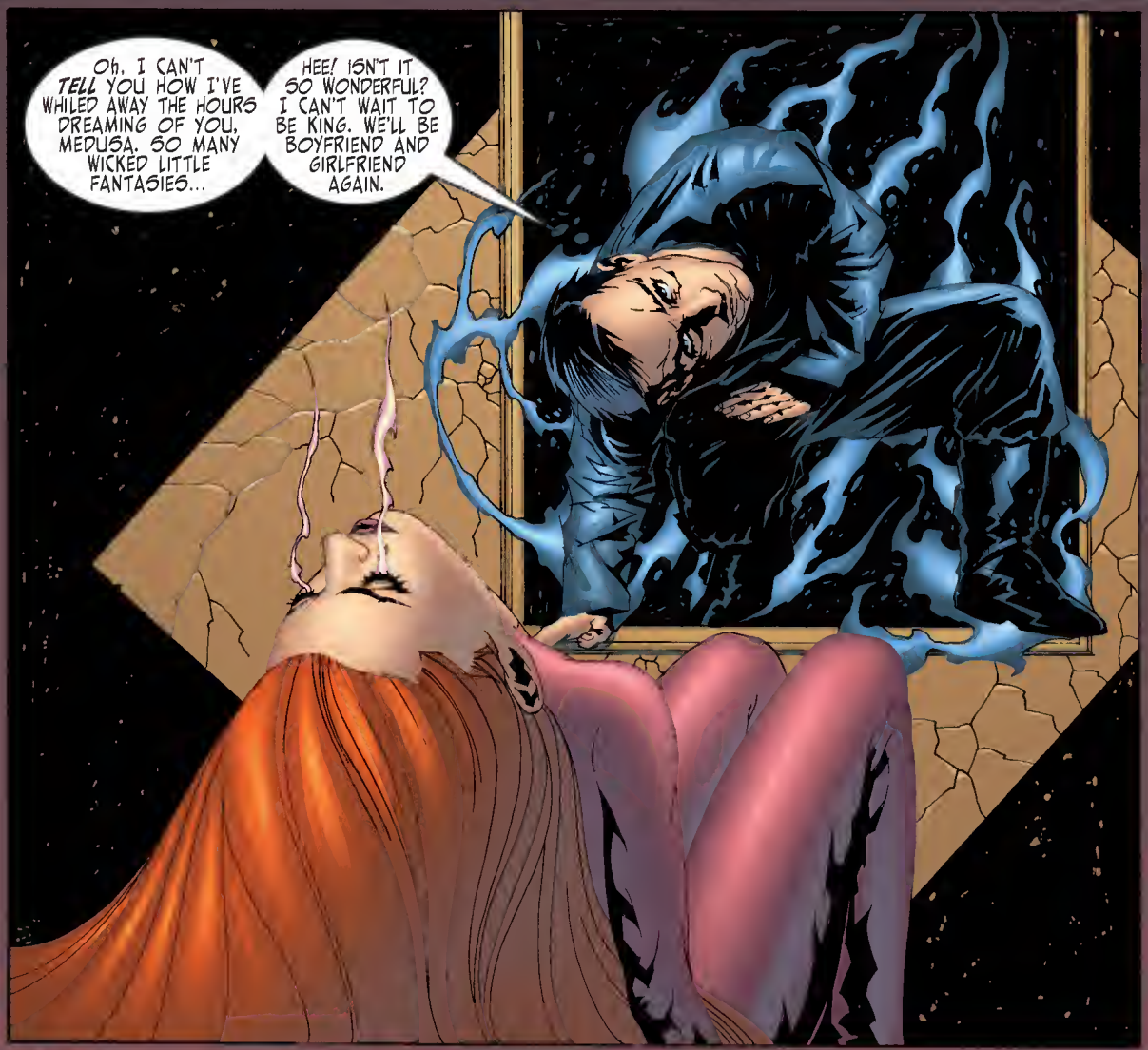

SOMETHING WONDROUS BIG HAS HAPPEN.
NOW, THERE IS MUCH TERRORS FOR US WHO LIVES IN DARKWARD END.
ALPHAS IS THINKINGS AND PLOTTINGS AGAIN...


THE PEOPLE ARE LAUGHING AT ME.
YOU'RE LETTING YOUR ALE CLOUD YOUR PERCEPTION AGAIN, GORGON. IT WAS I WHO DESIGNED MAXIMUS JAIL AND DETERMINED IT TO BE INESCAPABLE. IF ANYTHING, THE FAILURE IS MINE --
-- NO ONE ESCAPES DEATH, BROTHER. IF I HAD BEEN ALLOWED TO DISPOSE OF THE LUNATIC IN THE FIRST PLACE, THEN THIS PROBLEM WOULD NOT EXIST.
GODS, KARNAK... DOESN'T ANYONE ELSE BUT ME SEE WHAT'S HAPPENING HERE? OUR COURSE OF INACTION AGAINST THE HUMANS... IT'S SUICIDE.
I MAY NOT BE KING, BUT EVEN I KNOW THAT IF YOU DON'T TRAIN A DOG, ONE DAY IT'LL BITE YOU.
"MAXIMUS HAS GONE TO GROUND -- I KNOW IT. CENTRAL TERMINAL REPORTS THAT CONTROL OF THE CITY IS BEING WRESTED AWAY AND DIVERTED TO THE SUBSTRUCTURE, AND THERE'S NOTHING I CAN DO TO STOP IT.
"WE'VE LOST CONTACT WITH THE ALPHAS... ALL ACCESS POINTS HAVE BEEN SEALED... AND SINCE OUR RESOURCES ARE EXHAUSTED AT THE FRONT, I'M POWERLESS TO DO ANYTHING."
IN THE MEANTIME, THE HUMANS CONTINUE TO ATTACK AND BLACK BOLT CONTINUES TO DO NOTHING.
IN THE NAME OF EVOLUTION, KARNAK, WE'RE LOSING THE CITY.


BA-KOOM
AHH!!
WHAT'S WRONG?
I CAN'T GET THE VID MACHINE TO WORK PROPERLY.
LOOK!
LOOK!
"THIS IS THE VOICE OF CENTRAL TERMINAL -- WE ARE EXPERIENCING MINOR MALFUNCTIONS IN ALL CITY CONTROLS. THERE IS NO CAUSE FOR ALARM..."


I REMEMBERS HOW IT IS ONCE UPON TIMES, WHEN ATTILAN GO *DARK*.
FOR ONE SMALL WHILES, MAXIMUS IS KING. HE TAKES GOOD LIFE AWAY FROM ALL PEOPLES AND GIVES IT TO ALPHA PRIMITIVES.
PEOPLES LIKE I, WE IS HUNTED AND KILLED. "NOT PURE OF GENETICS, NOT GOOD TO LIVE IN CITY," SAY BAD KING MAXIMUS.
I FEAR BAD TIMES IS UPON US AGAIN. IN DARKWARD END, WE SEES SIGNS IN SKY -- DOME CRINKLING AND CRACKLING ABOVE US. NOISES FROM SUBSTRUCTURE, TOO.
MY VIDS MACHINE IS BROKEN.
NO FOOD COME TO ME TODAY, SO I DO NOT EAT. MY HOME IS COLD AND DARK.
I IS TERRIBLE AFRAID.


HELLO, BELOVED. DID YOU MISS ME?
YOU! H-HOW DARE YOU... HOW DID YOU GET IN HERE?
Oh, MEDUSA, YOU SILLY THING -- MY FRIEND HERE TELEPORTED ME INTO YOUR VANITY MIRROR, OF COURSE. DON'T YOU RECOGNIZE HIM?
IT'S LITTLE WOZ -- THE BOY THAT NOBODY LOVED. MY, HOW HE'S GROWN!
HEHH...I'LL LET YOU IN ON A LITTLE SECRET, THOUGH: THE MORON DOESN'T UNDERSTAND IT YET --
-- BUT I'M THE ONE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE GLITCH IN HIS TERRIGENESIS. AND I'M BLAMING IT ON YOUR HUBBY!
Oh, IT'S SUCH WONDERFUL INTRIGUE. ALL YOU NEED IS THE POWER TO CONTROL MINDS, AND AN UNWILLING TEST SUBJECT.
WELL, YOU GET THE POINT.


Oh, I can't TELL you how I've whiled away the hours dreaming of you, Medusa. So many wicked little fantasies...
Hee! Isn't it so wonderful? I can't wait to be king. We'll be boyfriend and girlfriend again.

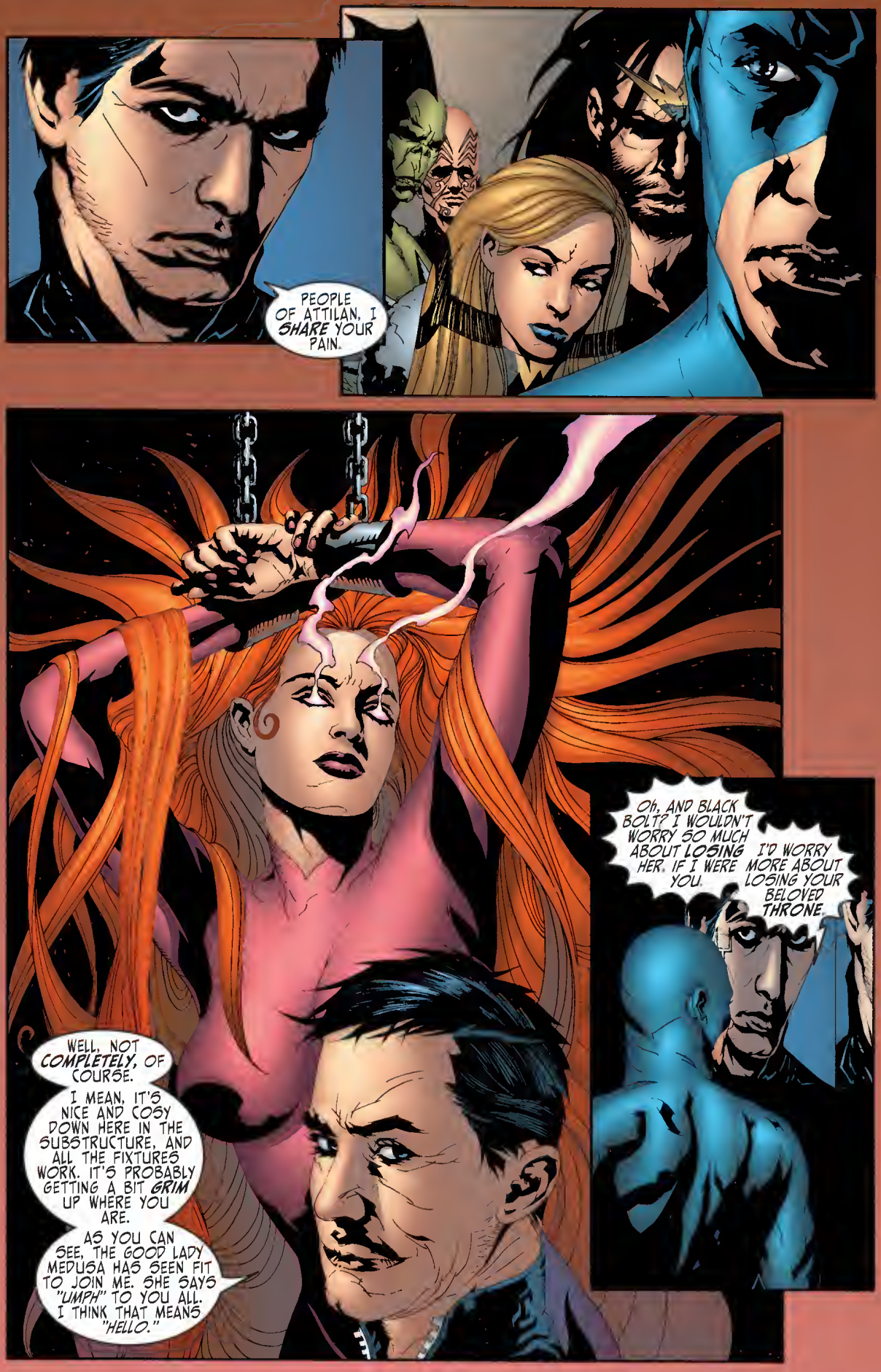

We'll have lots and lots of baby kings and queens. Hmm? All in favor raise their hands.


THAT'S the spirit! Ah well... all in good time. You and your pretty hair are coming with me down to the substructure.
Woz will lead the way.


Y... you... can't... win. The... VOTE --
Ah, the vote. Yes. And which way will the city GO, do you think? Attack, or stand their ground?


Oops. I almost forgot -- I've turned off the inner defenses.


BA-KOOM
NEIFI, LOOK OUT! BEHIND YOU!
BA-KOOM
...GET THE TELEKINETICS BACK UP FRONT! AND SOMEBODY TELL LORD GORGON TO GET OUT HERE!
AND SOMEBODY GET THAT CANNON!
BA-KOOM
AND SOMEBODY TELL ME WHAT JUST HAPPENED!


PEOPLE OF ATTILAN, I *SHARE* YOUR PAIN.
Oh, AND BLACK BOLT? I WOULDN'T WORRY SO MUCH ABOUT *LOSING* HER. IF I WERE YOU. I'D WORRY MORE ABOUT LOSING YOUR BELOVED *THRONE*.
WELL, NOT *COMPLETELY*, OF COURSE.
I MEAN, IT'S NICE AND COSY DOWN HERE IN THE SUBSTRUCTURE, AND ALL THE FIXTURES WORK. IT'S PROBABLY GETTING A BIT *GRIM* UP WHERE YOU ARE.
AS YOU CAN SEE, THE GOOD LADY MEDUSA HAS SEEN FIT TO JOIN ME. SHE SAYS "*UMPH*" TO YOU ALL. I THINK THAT MEANS "*HELLO*."


YOU KNOW WHAT REALLY GETS ON MY NERVES, FELLOW CITIZENS? ARROGANCE. THAT'S WHAT.


AMAZING, ISN'T IT, HOW MY BROTHER HAS THE GALL TO SEEK YOUR SUPPORT AS HE SACRIFICES ATTILAN.
AND YET HE HASN'T EVEN THE GUILE TO PROTECT HIS OWN WIFE FROM A MADMAN.


WELL, NUTTY AS A FRUITCAKE I MAY BE. BUT YOU KNOW WHAT THEY SAY: IF YOU WANT THE TRUTH, ASK A FOOL.
THE TRUTH IS, YOU'RE ALL GOING TO DIE...


"...AND IT'S ALL BLACK BOLT'S FAULT."


MY FELLOW CITIZENS, I FEEL IT IS MY DUTY AS MAD PRETENDER TO THE THRONE TO COME CLEAN, AS AWFUL AND *UPSETTING* AS IT MAY BE:
YOU HAVE BEEN *LIED* TO ABOUT THE HUMANS.
"THEY HAVE NOW BROKEN THROUGH *BOTH* PERIMETER DEFENSE MECHANISMS, THANKS LARGELY TO THE INSPIRED LEADERSHIP AND BATTLE-TESTED TOMFOOLERY OF OUR OWN GORGON THE GOAT.
"AS I SPEAK, THEY'RE ADVANCING HARD ON THE CITY ITSELF. AND SINCE WE CLEARLY DON'T WANT TO GO TO WAR WITH THE REST OF THE PLANET, IT SEEMS DIPLOMACY IS THE KEY.
IN WHICH CASE, *I'M* YOUR MAN. ACTUALLY, I'M PERSONAL FRIENDS WITH THEIR COMMANDER.
HE SAYS HE'LL STOP ATTACKING JUST AS SOON AS I GET MY THRONE BACK. HONEST.
AND FOR THOSE OF YOU WHO STILL AREN'T WORRIED, HAVE YOU LOOKED OUT OF THE *WINDOW* LATELY?
"AS YOU CAN SEE, SOMETHING SEEMS TO BE DESTROYING THE CITY'S PROTECTIVE DOME. WHICH, I NEED HARDLY REMIND YOU, IS THE ONLY THING STANDING BETWEEN YOU AND THE RAPIDLY-ADVANCING APEMEN OUTSIDE.
"BUT, BELIEVE IT OR NOT, THAT'S THE *LEAST* OF YOUR WORRIES."
YOU SEE, I HAVE A LITTLE *SECRET*...


NOW BEFORE I TELL YOU WHAT IT IS, I WANT YOU ALL TO PROMISE YOU WON'T BLAME ME. I'VE BEEN TRYING TO TELL EVERYONE FOR AGES, BUT YOUR BELOVED KING AND HIS CRONIES WOULDN'T LISTEN TO ME.
THE BIG SECRET IS THIS: THERE'S A FLAW.
"IT ALL HAS TO DO WITH ATLANTIS, YOU SEE. THE THING IS, WE'RE NOT EXACTLY ON SOLID GROUND. NO SURPRISE THERE, I SUPPOSE.
"BUT IT JUST SO HAPPENS I'VE DISCOVERED THE REASON WHY THE WHOLE ISLAND WENT UNDER ALL THOSE YEARS AGO, AND ALL THOSE PEOPLE ALONG WITH IT.
"SOMEWHERE OUTSIDE, VERY CLOSE TO THE CITY, IS A FLAW IN THE EARTH'S CRUST -- THE ORIGINAL FAULT LINE THAT RAN ACROSS ATLANTIS.
"EXACTLY WHERE IT IS, WELL... THAT'S ANYBODY'S GUESS. IT COULD BE UNDER A ROCK, OR NEXT TO A TREE SOMEWHERE. ANYWHERE, REALLY.
"BUT IT'S BETWEEN HERE AND THE INNER PERIMETER. AND IT'S RIGHT IN THE LINE OF FIRE.
"ALL IT NEEDS IS ONE DIRECT HIT..."
...AND WE'RE ALL GOING TO BE TAKING A BATH.


...AND SO I CLOSES MY LETTER TO YOU, KING BLACK BOLTS, WITH LOVE AND ADMIRATIONS.
I HOPES, IF I MAY, TO OFFER SERVICES FOR YOU. I WILL FIGHTS IN ROYAL ARMY TO KEEP AWAY HUMANS FROM ATTILAN. THIS MAKE PARENTS MIGHTY PROUD, I HOPE.
WILL YOU TELL THEMS, TO COME AND VISITS?
I HOPES IS NOT TRUE ABOUT ATLANTIS FALLING INTO SEA. PLEASE WRITES BACK SOON WITH PROPER TRUTHS. YOUR SERVANTS FOREVER, REXEL TOIVEN.
TRANSMIT...
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MARVEL
KNIGHTS
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MAYBE WE DO STILL HAVE HIM TO KICK AROUND





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THE TEAM


Never thought much about being a man.
YO, QUE PASA, PUSSY CAT MAN. REMEMBER ME? MANUEL RAMOS?
YO, YOU NOT SO TOUGH NO MORE, eh?
WHAT ABOUT MY 'STANG, YO.
I'D SAY THIS MUV STEPPER HAS SERIOUS HEALTH ISSUES RIGHT ABOUT NOW.
I mean, sure, I've got the right EQUIPMENT, but I think my complete collection of HANSEN records disqualifies me.
SURRENDER YOURSELVES, AND I WILL NOT HARM YOU.
That and the fact my inner child had just WET himself.
Ah -- YOUR HIGHNESS --
-- I THINK MAYBE A REVIEW OF THE SITUATION MAY BE IN ORDER...
US SURRENDER?
YO, MAN, HOLMES IS WACK IN THE HEAD, YO.
MIRA, ESE --


-- YOU BEEN DOGGIN' ALL US LOCALS SINCE YOU GOT HERE BREAKIN' OFF OUR TURF --
-- MESSIN' UP OPERATIONS AND WHAT-NOT, WELL, ENOUGH OF THAT, YO
WE PUT OUR MONEY TOGETHER -- HIRED THAT KRAVEN, RIGHT? HE DELIVERED YOU TO US.
FFSSSSHH
NOW, 'STEDA YOU PUTTIN' THE BAG ON US --
-- WE DONE BAGGED YOU, MAN HOLMES
AND, ey YO --
-- HOPE YOU MADE O'BESTOS.
ANY LAST WORDS, MUV STEPPER?
YES --
-- THIS IS YOUR FINAL WARNING.
Ah --
-- I SUPPOSE NOW WOULD BE A GOOD TIME TO MENTION WE'RE NOT A TEAM OR ANYTHING...


BLAM
BLAAAM
BBRRAATATATATAT
BLAMM
BLAM
BLAAAM
KAPP KAPP KAPP
DIRT NAP TIME, PUSSY CAT-MAN.
BLAM
BLAMM
BLAAAM
BBRRAATATATATAT
KAPP KAPP
BLAM
I screamed like a little girl.
AAAAAHHHHH!
BBRRAATATATATAT
BLAM
KAPP KAPP
BLAM
It had both RANGE and SUSTENANCE--
BBRRAATATATATAT
BLAM
KAPP KAPP
BLAAAM
BLAMM
-- just like the BLUE CHICK in Fifth Element.
I held the note until they ran out of bullets.
AAAAAHHHHH!
KLIK
KLIK
KLIK
KK-KLAAAKKK
About TWO YEARS by my count.
They looked almost ANNOYED. Like 316 rounds wasn't quite ENOUGH to take out two guys.


As it turned out, it WASN'T.
VERY WELL. YOU HAVE MADE YOUR CHOICE.
AAAAHHHH!
NOW IT IS MY TURN.
BULL-!!
I'MO TAKE HOLMES OUT --!
YO -- YO RAMOS, MAN -- THE BROTHER IS OBVIOUSLY BULLET-RESISTANT.
WE'VE ALREADY STARTED THE FIRE -- THIS PLACE IS GOING UP.
KLIK
I BELIEVE THE PRUDENT MOVE WOULD BE TO EXIT, STAGE LEFT AND WHAT-NOT.
O'BOY AIN'T GOIN' NOWHERE.
YEAH, YEAH, YEAH...
...AIIGHT WE OUT LET PUSSY CAT-MAN BURN!
AAAAHHHH!


THE SHOOTING WAS OVERKILL.
KIND OF LIKE LEANNE RHIMES' COVER OF *PURPLE RAIN*. YOU JUST SHAKE YOUR HEAD AND WONDER WHY.
SOOOO -- WHAT'S THE *MOVE* HERE, YOUR HIGHNESS --?
I MEAN, I VAGUELY REMEMBER YOU SAYING SOMETHING ABOUT THE *VIBRANIUM WEBBING* IN YOUR COSTUME BEING *BULLETPROOF* --
-- SAPPING THE *BULLETS* OF THEIR *INERTIA* --
-- AND, LUCKILY, THEY WERE SHOOTING AT *YOU* AND NOT *ME* --
-- AND I'M HOPING OUR MOVE HERE ISN'T *BREAK THE SHACKLES* BECAUSE, WELL --
-- BUT I'M AT A *LOSS* TO SEE HOW THAT PROTECTS US FROM BEING *DEEP-FRIED*
THOSE *BOLTS* LOOK THICK ENOUGH TO HOLD AN *ELEPHANT*, YOUR HIGHNESS --
-- I WAS HOPING FOR SOMETHING JUST A *TAD* MORE *CLEVER* AS CHUNKS OF *FLAMING ROOF* FALL ON MY HEAD --
-- AND MY *LIFE* FLASHES BEFORE MY *EYES* --


No.
"BREAK THE SHACKLES --" "BREAK THE SHACKLES --" IS GOOD -- YEAH, THAT WORKS!
CCCHHAAAKK
And, eventually, I figured out WHY.
Sure, the SHACKLES were UNBREAKABLE, but those idiots set the place on FIRE.
An old tenement building with ROTTING FLOORS. Made all the MORE fragile --
KKRAKK
It really IS amazing how clear everything becomes when you're BURNING ALIVE.
AHHH! AAACCKK! YAHHH--!
I started screaming. Not because I was ROASTING --
-- but because I'd just remembered --
-- my TUX was a RENTAL.
-- by the VIBRANIUM SOLES of the client's BOOTS.
AAAAAHHHHH!


SSKREEEECH
AH -- MAN -- HERE WE GO WIT' THIS NOW!
GRUMBLE... STILL WANNA CAP HIS BEHIND...
RAMOS, MY BROTHER -- NEED TO RELAX. DUDE IS ROAST BEEF, MAN.
MAKE IT PLAIN, DEZ, MAKE IT PLAIN!
RELOAD -- TIME TO CAP SOME NOSEY BROADS, YO --!
SSSSZZZ
HEADS UP--!
?! WHAT THE --?!
--?! TH -- THE SHACKLE --
-- B-BUT THAT CAN'T BE -- UNLESS --
-- UNLESS --
-- Oh CRUD...




ZURI.
Now, see, that was the fun part about escorting the client.
The GUN BATTLES.
AAAAHHH
And being tossed around like a CAMPAIGN PROMISE.
DEATH TO HIM WHO WOULD DARE HARM WAKANDA'S ANOINTED!!!
I've no doubt, were that downtown WAKANDA instead of Hell's Kitchen --
AAAAAAHHH
-- a LOT of people would have STOPPED BREATHING that night.
But the client was ADAMANT about observing U.S. LAW.
Well, MOST of it, anyway.
After all, the client was STUCK here in the States for the time being.
AAAAAAHHH


It only made SENSE for him to set up a little kingdom of his OWN.
WE HAD AN UNDERSTANDING RAMOS.
I TOLD YOU TO SPEAK OF IT TO NO MAN.*
AND NOW, IN DISOBEDIENCE, YOU HAVE JOINED WITH MANY WHOM I HAVE CHOSEN.
AND SO OUR AGREEMENT HAS BEEN VITIATED.
FROM THIS NIGHT FORWARD, MANUEL RAMOS, YOU HAVE NO LIFE.
YOU BELONG TO ME. SAY IT.
I -- I --
-- ALRIGHT, MAN! I BELONG TO YOU, SHEEZZ!
SAY IT WITH RESPECT.
I BELONG TO YOU! I BELONG TO YOU!!
NOW TELL ME -- HOW DO A HALF-DOZEN IGNORANT FOOLS MANAGE TO HIRE KRAVEN --? WHO ARRANGED IT?!
*Issue#1 -- J&J
ZURI -- SEE TO AGENT ROSS
I HAVE A BIT OF UNFINISHED BUSINESS REMAINING...
AAAAAHHHHHH!
-- WAIT -- YOUR HIGHNESS -- YOU CAN'T JUST -- JUST --
-- CRIPES YOU BELIEVE THAT GUY?!
MAGNIFICENT, ISN'T HE?
Huh! WHAT A MAN.
I TELL YOU -- IF I WAS BLACK -- AND GAY -- WELL THERE YOU GO.

THE CALL


I later found out what the client's HURRY was.
Though I could have GUESSED --
-- I would have been WRONG.
NOW, HOW DID I *KNOW* YOU'D COME *FIND* ME?
PERHAPS BECAUSE *YOU* ARE THE MAN *RESPONSIBLE* FOR TONIGHT'S DISTURBANCES --
-- *WHITE WOLF*.
I THOUGHT WE HAD SAID OUR FAREWELLS THE OTHER NIGHT.
WHETHER I *WISH* IT OR *NOT*.
Oh, YOU *WISH IT*, KING.
I *SAW* YOUR HEEL ON THAT LOWLIFE'S NECK.
YOU CAN'T *ARGUE* WITH ITS *EFFECTIVENESS*.
ENEMIES OF THE *REALM* NEED TO BE *DEALT* WITH --
-- YOUR FATHER THE KING *KNEW* THAT.
THERE WON'T *BE* ANY GOOD-BYES BETWEEN *US*, KING.
I BELONGED TO YOUR *FATHER*, AND NOW I BELONG TO *YOU* --
IT WAS *YOU* WHO *APPROACHED* RAMOS AND THE REST --
-- WHO GAVE THEM THE *IDEA* -- AND THE *RESOURCES* -- TO CONTACT *KRAVEN*.
*Issue #4 -- J&J.


OF COURSE.
JUST MAKING A *POINT*, YOUR HIGHNESS.
I KNOW YOUR STEPMOTHER IS KEEPING THE PEACE IN WAKANDA --
-- MAINTAINING A FRAGILE *DÉTENTE* WITH THAT IDIOT *ACHEBE* --
-- A PEACE CONTINGENT ON *YOUR CONTINUED EXILE* HERE IN THE STATES.
BUT WE *BOTH* KNOW IT'S A *LIE*. NOW DON'T WE?
WE *BOTH* KNOW THE *LONGER* YOU REMAIN HERE, THE MORE ENTRENCHED YOUR *TRUE ENEMY* BECOMES.
WE *BOTH* KNOW --
-- YOU *NEED* ME.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'VE GOT UP YOUR *SLEEVE*, T'CHALLA --
-- BUT TICK-TOCK, BY THE WAY --
-- YOU *CALL* HER YET --?



DON'T DROP THE SOAP






The Dora Milaje were changing clothes.
Ignoring me. Like I was a SOFA.
<NAKIA, DO NOT DELUDE YOURSELF.>
<WE ARE THE KING'S CONCOMITANTS. NOTHING MORE.>*
I was DEAFENED by the sound of JAIL DOORS slamming shut.
*From Hausa -- J&J
<I AM MORE, OKOYE.>
<THE KING KISSED ME -- EXPRESSED HIS LOVE FOR ME -->
<-- THAT WHICH I HAVE LONGED FOR ALL MY LIFE!>
Zuri was no help.
ONE SIDE, JACKALS!
HONNNNNKKKKK
MAKE WAY FOR THE CONVEYANCE OF THE KING OF THE REALM!
The Milaje were just KIDS to him. beneath his notice.
Lucky HIM.
I was most DEFINITELY going to Hell. AGAIN.
< YOU ARE BUT A CHILD NAKIA, AS AM I.>
<LOVE FOR OUR KING COMES NATURALLY AND EASILY. BUT HE DOES NOT LOVE US IN THAT WAY -->
<HE LOVES ME. OKOYE.>
<AND I LOVE HIM WITH MY WHOLE HEART.>
<AND WE SHALL BE TOGETHER. I WILL SEE TO IT.>

HOW FIRED CAN YOU GET?



THE LESSON


Little did we know, but a REMATCH of sorts was taking place over in Tribeca...
SSSKRATCH
GOOD. GOOD. REDEEM MY FAITH IN YOU!
ALL THOSE YEARS IN THE VELDT TAUGHT ME A HUNTER IS ONLY AS GOOD AS HIS PREY.
AND YOU ARE WORTHY PREY INDEED!
HAD YOU NOT ESCAPED, I WOULD HAVE KILLED THEM MYSELF.
HAD YOU NOT ESCAPED, I'D HAVE KNOWN YOU WERE NOT THE WORTHY FOE I ASSUMED YOU TO BE!
WORTHY OF EVEN THE DEAD FATHER WHO STALKS MY DREAMS -- WHO DRAWS ME TO HIS PATH!
THERE IS MUCH I CAN LEARN FROM YOU -- WHICH IS WHY I ACCEPTED THE WHITE WOLF'S COMMISSION TO DELIVER YOU INTO THE HANDS OF UNWORTHY CRETINS.
WHAM


BUT ESCAPE YOU DID.
AND NOW I COME TO HONOR YOU.
TO PRESENT MY REASONABLE SACRIFICE TO THE GREAT PANTHER --
-- LORD OF THE PANTHER CLAN.
MAKE ME YOUR DISCIPLE!
TEACH ME YOUR WAYS!
LIQUORS
313
SHOW ME!
YES.
YESSS--!
THWAACKK


SSZZAAZKK
SHOW ME!
MORE.
Now, everything I'd read about the client said he was this real gentle guy.
Some even called him an ineffectual pacifist who believed in PEACE above all. Mr. Magoo in an AFRO.
MORE!
And, actually, he WAS a pacifist. He DID believe in peace. But somewhere just SOUTH of those lofty ideals --
-- was the guy dicing up Kraven on West Broadway.
And even as he turned the lights out on the RUSSKIE he KNEW --


-- he'd WON and LOST at the SAME TIME--
PANTHER --!
-- THAT'S ENOUGH --! AND --
-- THE AVENGERS WANT SOME ANSWERS!
NEXT:
THAT BUSINESS WITH THE AVENGERS GUEST-STARRING GUYS IN CAPES


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CHRIS SOTOMAYOR COLORS RICHARD STARKINGS & COMICRAFT'S WES ABBOTT LETTERS
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I WAS ONLY ASKIN', MA. I MEAN I WAS TRYNNA BE POLITE, YA KNOW, SHOW A LITTLE CONCERN...
YOU. DIMWIT. SHOOT MY BRAIN-DAMAGED COUSIN IN THE FACE.
...MA'AM?
ARE YOU DEAF OR SOMETHING? KILL COUSIN STEVIE.
HEY... HEY NOW, MA...
C-COME ON, MRS. GNUCCI, YOU DON'T REALLY WANT ME TO SHOOT HIM...!
I DON'T? OH, OF COURSE I DON'T. SILLY ME, I FORGOT MY EMPLOYEES KNOW MY MIND BETTER THAN DO
SECOND DIMWIT. KILL FIRST DIMWIT AND MY IDIOT COUSIN NOW


M-M-M-MEZ
NO, MEATHEAD. I WANT NAMOR THE SUB-MARINER TO DO IT INSTEAD. OF COURSE YOU.
I CAN'T KILL JOEY MA'AM. WE'VE BEEN BUDDIES OUR ENTIRE LIVES --
MRS. GNUCCI, I'M SURE HE DIDN'T INTEND NO DISRESPECT --
I MEAN, SURE, WE'RE ALL REAL EMOTIONAL RIGHT NOW --
MA'AM, REALLY, YOU CAN'T BE SERIOUS --
MA, PLEASE, WAIT A MINUTE, I WAS ONLY ASKIN' --
THIRD DIMWIT KILL SECOND DIMWIT AND HIS LIFELONG FRIEND. AND MY COUSIN STEVIE.
MA, NO! I'M BLOOD, I'M --
MRS. GNUCCI, PLEASE RECONSIDER
THIS IS CRAZY, MA'AM --
I'M FAMILY --
REALLY, PLEASE --
SO CRAZY --

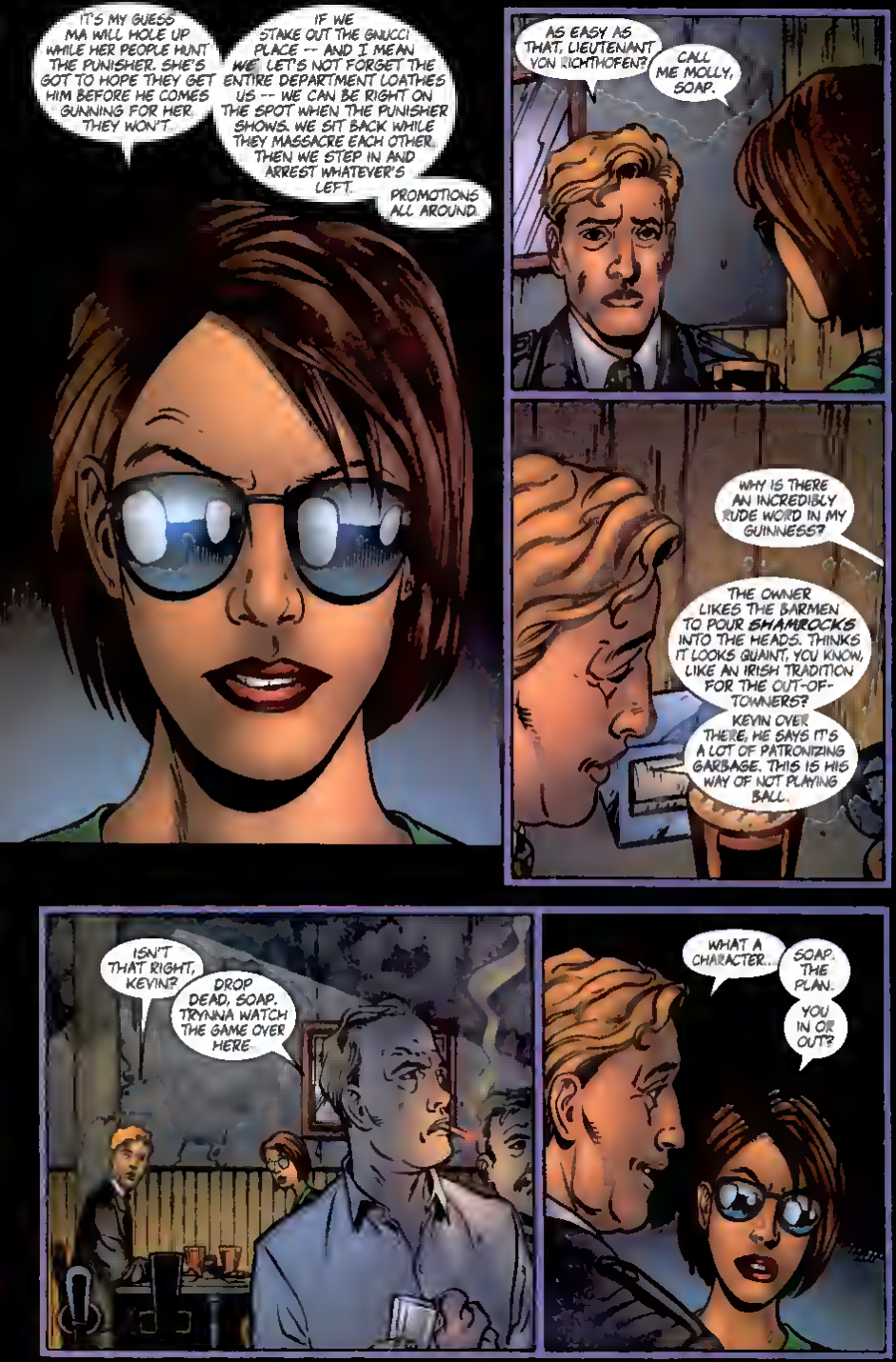

BADDAM
BADDAM
BADDAM
GOOD.
TEN DAYS AGO I WAS FED TO A PACK OF POLAR BEARS.
ANYONE DOUBTING I MEAN WHAT I SAY WOULD DO WELL TO REMEMBER THAT.
CLEAN THIS MESS UP AND LET'S GET DOWN TO BUSINESS


WELL, WE... UH...
SPIT IT OUT, NOSEPICK.
WE GOT ALL THE LINES OUT, MRS. GNUCCI, BUT AIN'T NOTHIN' CHANGED YOU KNOW THE PUNISHER'S REP: TRACKIN' THE GUY'S ALWAYS BEEN NEXT TO IMPOSSIBLE
THAT CHANGES AS OF NOW. THE PUNISHER'S REP IS ABOUT TO TAKE A NOSE-DIVE
GET EVERYONE ON IT. HAVE THEM DROP WHAT THEY'RE DOING AND START LOOKING. TURN OVER EVERY STONE IN TOWN UNTIL YOU FIND OUT WHERE THAT COCKROACH IS HIDING.
AND SPREAD THE WORD: VENDETTA. I AM PUTTING TEN MILLION DOLLARS ON THE HEAD OF THE ANIMAL THAT DID THIS TO ME.
YOU --
YOU WANT US TO PUT A HIT ON THE BEAR?
ON THE PUNISHER...
OH.


WHAT HAPPENED, DAVE?
SPACKER DAVE!
CHECK IT OUT, DUDE! THIS IS INTENSE!
MR. BUMPO HAD ONE OF HIS CORONARIES AND THEY COULDN'T GET HIM OUT THE DOOR, DUDE! THEY HAD TO TAKE HALF THE WALL OUT INSTEAD!
SEE YOU SOON, MR. SMITH.
TAKE IT EASY, MR. BUMPO.

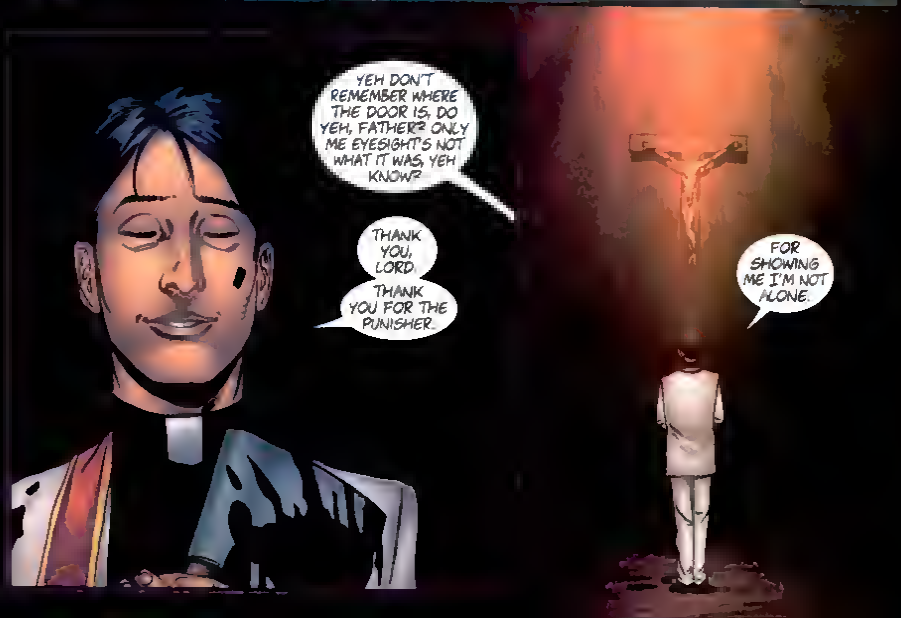

MOST EXCITING THING TO HAPPEN ALL WEEK
TOOK SOME TIME OUT TO HEAL NOT GETTING ANY YOUNGER...
NO INFECTION STITCHES HELD
SO TONIGHT I GO BACK TO LOOKING FOR TROUBLE
MA SNUCCI LIVING CAME AS A SHOCK OLD WITCH IS BLESSED BY THE DEVIL HIMSELF
NOK NOK
SHE WON'T HAVE BEEN WASTING TIME
BY NOW I'M THE MAGIC ONE LAST JOB FOR EVERY KILLER ON THE EAST COAST
NOK NOK
I BAKED TOO MANY PIES.


YOU COME HERE A LOT, SOAP?
Lucky's Bar
TRADITIONAL IRISH CUISINE
TO WORK. MOSTLY. WRITE REPORTS AND SO ON. IT'S NICE AND QUIET. YOU DON'T GET TOO MANY PEOPLE COMING
REALLY.
FOOD'S CHEAP, TOO.
MY TREAT, BY THE WAY.
I GUESS IT'S THE THOUGHT THAT COUNTS.
MM?
ABOUT THE PUNISHER...
WITH MA GNUCCI BACK ON THE SCENE, YOU THINK...?
YOU WANT HIM AND I WANT HER. I SAY IT'S WORTH A TRY.


IT'S MY GUESS MA WILL HOLE UP WHILE HER PEOPLE HUNT THE PUNISHER. SHE'S GOT TO HOPE THEY GET HIM BEFORE HE COMES GUNNING FOR HER. THEY WON'T.
IF WE STAKE OUT THE GNUCCI PLACE -- AND I MEAN WE, LET'S NOT FORGET THE ENTIRE DEPARTMENT LOATHES US -- WE CAN BE RIGHT ON THE SPOT WHEN THE PUNISHER SHOWS. WE SIT BACK WHILE THEY MASSACRE EACH OTHER. THEN WE STEP IN AND ARREST WHATEVER'S LEFT.
PROMOTIONS ALL AROUND.
AS EASY AS THAT, LIEUTENANT VON RICHTHOFEN?
CALL ME MOLLY, SOAP.
WHY IS THERE AN INCREDIBLY RUDE WORD IN MY GUINNESS?
THE OWNER LIKES THE BARMEN TO POUR SHAMROCKS INTO THE HEADS. THINKS IT LOOKS QUAINT, YOU KNOW, LIKE AN IRISH TRADITION FOR THE OUT-OF-TOWNERS?
KEVIN OVER THERE, HE SAYS IT'S A LOT OF PATRONIZING GARBAGE. THIS IS HIS WAY OF NOT PLAYING BALL.
ISN'T THAT RIGHT, KEVIN?
DROP DEAD, SOAP. TRYNNA WATCH THE GAME OVER HERE.
WHAT A CHARACTER..
SOAP. THE PLAN.
YOU IN OR OUT?


"UM. IN
HAAAIIEEEE!
I'M NOT ALONE ANYMORE! I'M NOT!
PRAISE GOD, I'M NOT ALONE!
WHAT'S THAT YEH'RE SHOUTIN ABOUT THERE, FATHER REDONDO?
MRS. PEARSE!
I'VE COME TO CLEAN THE CHURCH AGAIN, FATHER EIGHT O'CLOCK ON MONDAY EVENIN' -- TIME FOR CLEANIN'!
IT'S LUNCHTIME AND THIS IS THURSDAY, MRS. PEARSE! BUT YOU DROP BY WHENEVER YOU LIKE!


WHAT?
I SAID I'VE JUST MACKED A MAN TO DEATH IN THE CONFESSIONAL, MRS. PEARSE!
WHAT?!
ME HEARIN'S NOT WHAT IT WAS, FATHER. I'LL JUST GET ON WI' THE CLEANIN'.
MR. CLYDE BEAT HIS WIFE TO A PULP! MR. CLYDE TOOK COCAINE! MR. CLYDE CAME TO CONFESS HIS SINS SO HE COULD GO OUT WITH A CLEAN CONSCIENCE AND DO IT ALL OVER AGAIN!
THAT'S KIND OF YEH TO OFFER, FATHER. I'LL HAVE A CUP IF YEH'RE MAKIN' IT...
WELL, I SHOWED HIM! I TOOK HIS CONFESSION ALL RIGHT, AND I SOLVED HIS PROBLEM FOR HIM THERE AND THEN!


YEH DON'T REMEMBER WHERE THE DOOR IS, DO YEH, FATHER? ONLY ME EYESIGHT'S NOT WHAT IT WAS, YEH KNOW?
THANK YOU, LORD.
THANK YOU FOR THE PUNISHER.
FOR SHOWING ME I'M NOT ALONE.

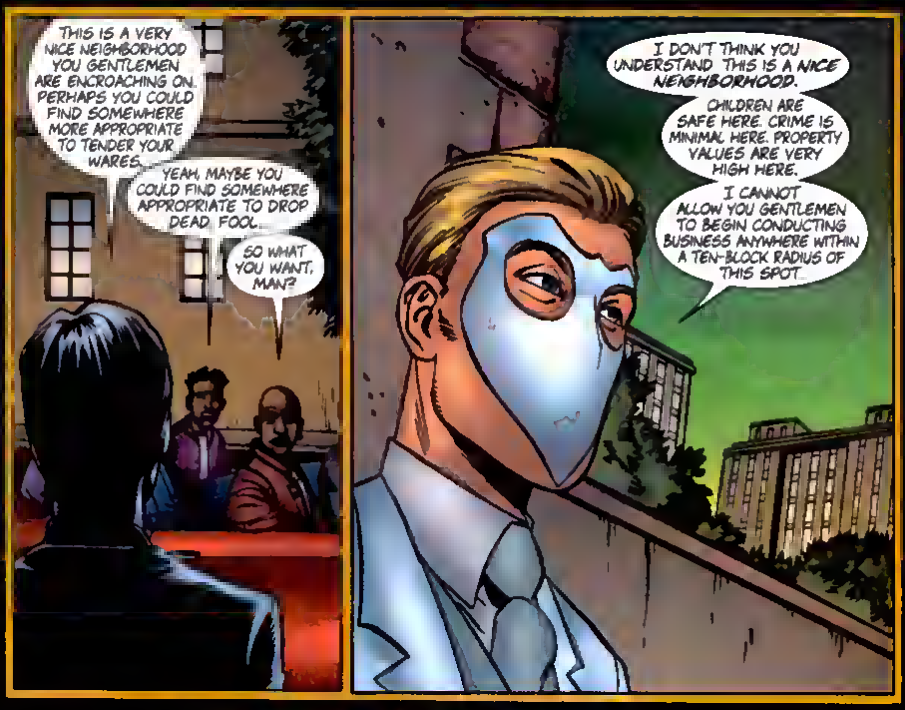

SO IN CONCLUSION, PROFITS ARE UP...
AS USUAL THANK YOU, MARK.
MR CHAIRMAN
I THINK THAT CONCLUDES OUR BUSINESS FOR TODAY --
WRONG.
WHAT THE --
CALL ME
MR. PAYBACK


PAYBACK FOR THE MISERY YOU'VE CAUSED! PAYBACK FOR THE COMMUNITIES YOU'VE DESTROYED!
BUT -- BUT -- WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
YOU KNOW, MONSTER YOU KNOW.
YOUR SECURITY GUARDS ARE UNCONSCIOUS, GASSED. MY FIGHT IS NOT WITH THEM.
YOU WILL NOT BE QUITE SO FORTUNATE...
WORLDWIDE INVESTMENT CORPORATION -- THE GREAT AND THE GOOD! A FINGER IN EVERY PIE! MILLIONS OF DOLLARS PASS THROUGH YOUR HANDS EACH DAY!
MILLIONS OF GALLONS OF BLOOD ARE SPLASHING ON THOSE SAME HANDS!
THAT'S A DAMN LIE!
NO BACKCHAT!


DEAR LORD --
BACK IN YOUR SEATS!
YOU INVESTED IN LARSON AIRCRAFT CORP. BUILT AIRLINERS WITH SUBSTANDARD ENGINES. LOSING A LAWSUIT WOULD BE CHEAPER THAN REFITTING THE PLANES. YOU FIGURED
TWO HUNDRED SEVENTY-FIVE PEOPLE DIED WHEN FLIGHT L-901 PILED INTO A MOUNTAIN -- BUT YOU DIDN'T CARE.
YOU WERE WRONG ABOUT THE LAWSUIT. CLOSED DOWN THE LARSON FACTORY IN FAIRVILLE, KENTUCKY. COST THREE THOUSAND PEOPLE THEIR JOBS.
FAIRVILLE BECAME A CRIME-RIDDEN SLUM -- BUT YOU DIDN'T CARE.
YOU SET UP A NEW FACTORY IN TAIWAN. YOUR WORKERS' PAY AND SAFETY STANDARDS ARE SOME OF THE LOWEST ON THE PLANET. YOU COLLUDED WITH LOCAL AUTHORITIES TO COMBAT UNREST IN THE WORKFORCE.
OVER A HUNDRED UNION ORGANIZERS WERE KILLED BY POLICE DEATH SQUADS --
BUT YOU DIDN'T. CARE.


Y-YOU CAN'T PROVE ANY OF THAT --!
SILENCE!
YOU PEOPLE ARE CRIMINAL SCUM! YOU SIT HERE IN YOUR FANCY BOARDROOM WITH YOUR THOUSAND DOLLAR SUITS ON AND YOU THINK YOUR HANDS ARE CLEAN — BUT YOU ARE WRONG!
YOU ARE LOWER THAN THE FILTHIEST HOOD ON THE STREET! YOU ARE GUILTY!
AND NOW IT'S TIME FOR PAYBACK!
NO!
AAAAHH!
TIME FOR PAYBACK!
AAAAIIIEEEEE!


ARE YOU GENTLEMEN CRACK DEALERS, BY ANY CHANCE?
ARE WE WHAT?
I DUNNO, SHERLOCK WHAT YOU THINK WE ARE?
AN' JUS' EXACTLY WHAT YOU S'POSED TO BE?
I AM
ELITE.


THIS IS A VERY NICE NEIGHBORHOOD YOU GENTLEMEN ARE ENCROACHING ON. PERHAPS YOU COULD FIND SOMEWHERE MORE APPROPRIATE TO TENDER YOUR WARES.
YEAH, MAYBE YOU COULD FIND SOMEWHERE APPROPRIATE TO DROP DEAD, FOOL.
SO WHAT YOU WANT, MAN?
I DON'T THINK YOU UNDERSTAND. THIS IS A NICE NEIGHBORHOOD.
CHILDREN ARE SAFE HERE. CRIME IS MINIMAL HERE. PROPERTY VALUES ARE VERY HIGH HERE.
I CANNOT ALLOW YOU GENTLEMEN TO BEGIN CONDUCTING BUSINESS ANYWHERE WITHIN A TEN-BLOCK RADIUS OF THIS SPOT.


YEAH, YEAH, WHATEVER. C'MON, WHAT IS IT YOU WANT, HOMES?
I MEAN, YOU GOT THE CASH I CAN GET IT FOR YOU, JUS TELL ME WHAT YOU LIKE...
I WANT YOU TRASH TO LEAVE BECAUSE YOU LOWER THE TONE.
MAN, THIS DUDE IS TRIPPIN'...!
YOU GOT ANY IDEA WHO YOU MESSIN' WIT', FOOL?


FUNT
DAMN!


FUNT
AAAAH, NO --
STEVIE, GET THE GAUGE --


FUNT
FUNT
FUNT


PEASANTS...


WUFF!
YOUR DOG IS URINATING ON THE SIDEWALK, MA'AM.
WHAT'S IT TO YOU, FREAKSHOW?
THE NAME IS ELITE, MA'AM.
FLINT
YAAARF --!
M-MR FLUFFIKINS --!
IT'S A NICE NEIGHBORHOOD MA'AM.
LET'S TRY AND KEEP IT THAT WAY.


BEEN WALKING THE STREETS ALL NIGHT.
BUT THE CITY'S DEAD.
TIMES SQUARE IS FILLED WITH TOURISTS. THE PARK IS FILLED WITH COPS.
NOT FIVE YEARS BACK I COULD'VE GONE TO EITHER AND BEEN UP TO MY EYES IN SCUM.
TONIGHT I MAY AS WELL'VE STAYED HOME.
GIULIANI'S GOT A LOT TO ANSWER FOR.
GIMME YOUR WALLET AN' JEWELRY! C'MON, HAND IT OVER!


YOU DEAF OR SOMETHIN'? YOU GONNA GIVE ME A PROBLEM?
WELL, IT ISN'T MUCH.
BUT I GUESS IT'LL HAVE TO DO
YOU GONNA MAKE ME CUT YOU?!
ENOUGH IS ENOUGH. I'M AS HEALED AS I'M GOING TO GET
TOMORROW I FINISH THE JOB I STARTED.
HERE I COME, MA
READY OR NOT


THIS IS AL GRUMMET, MRS. GNUCCI. HE WANTED TO SEE YOU.
WELL I DON'T WANT TO SEE HIM. HE LOOKS ABSOLUTELY REPULSIVE. GET RID OF HIM.
FLUSH TWICE.
WHAT?
NO -- WAIT --
MRS. GNUCCI, HE CAME ABOUT THE PUNISHER! HE HEARD ABOUT THE TEN MILLION. HE SAYS HE'S GOT INFORMATION!
Y-Y-YEAH!
WHAT? WHAT IS IT YOU KNOW?
I FOUND HIM, LADY!
HE LIVES RIGHT ACROSS THE STREET FROM ME...!
TO BE CONTINUED


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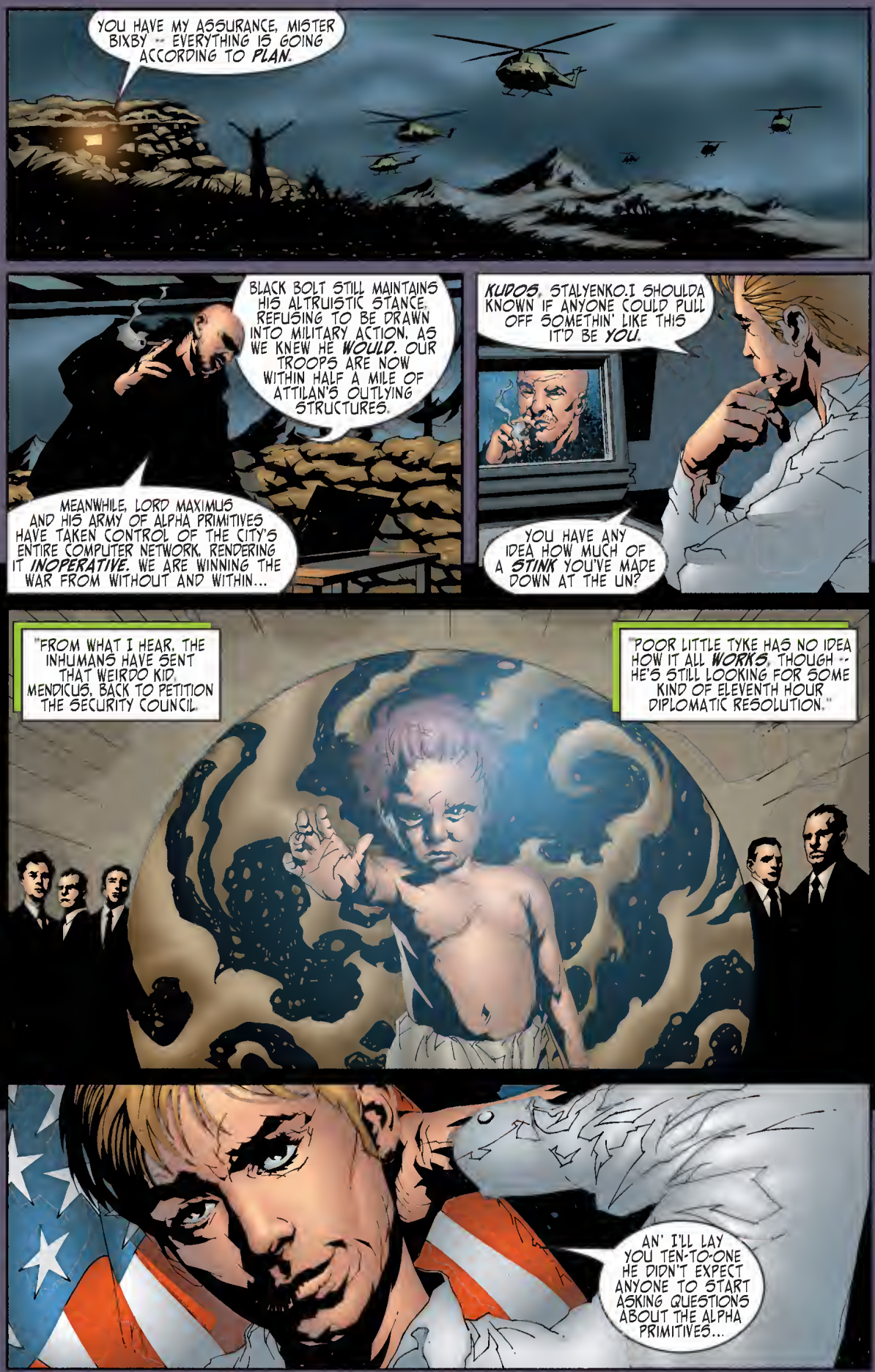


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PEOPLE NOISY BARK BARK... SLEEP IS GONE SCRATCHITY-SCRATCH
URFF
DOG GO OUTSIDE...
SNFF
SNFF
SNFF


...AND I SWEAR, HER HUSBAND OPENS THE SHOWER CURTAIN JUST AS I'M RUNNING OUT THE BACK DOOR IN MY SKIVVIES --
HEY --!
DID ANY OF YOU JUST HEAR THAT NOISE BACK THERE?
JUST 'CAUSE YOU BAGGED A FREAK OUT AT THE CITY --
-- DON'T MEAN YOU'RE GONNA FIND ANY OUT HERE.
I SAW SOMETHING. OKAY? I'M GOING OVER TO TAKE A LOOK.
CAREFUL, MAN...IT MIGHT BE ONE OF THEM INHUMAN HYPERSQUIRRELS. I HEARD THEY CAN SHOOT YOUR BRAIN OUT WITH AN ACORN AT TWENTY PACES --
YEAH, WELL... I GUESS YOU IDIOTS ARE SAFE, THEN...


IT'S OKAY... NO PROBLEM! LOOKS LIKE SOME KIND OF ANIMAL WAS DOING ITS BUSINESS ON THIS TREE
I, Uh...
OMIGOD.
YOU MURDERED MY BROTHER.
AAAH!


YOU HAVE MY ASSURANCE, MISTER BIXBY -- EVERYTHING IS GOING ACCORDING TO PLAN.
BLACK BOLT STILL MAINTAINS HIS ALTRUISTIC STANCE, REFUSING TO BE DRAWN INTO MILITARY ACTION, AS WE KNEW HE WOULD. OUR TROOPS ARE NOW WITHIN HALF A MILE OF ATTILAN'S OUTLYING STRUCTURES.
MEANWHILE, LORD MAXIMUS AND HIS ARMY OF ALPHA PRIMITIVES HAVE TAKEN CONTROL OF THE CITY'S ENTIRE COMPUTER NETWORK, RENDERING IT INOPERATIVE. WE ARE WINNING THE WAR FROM WITHOUT AND WITHIN...
KUDOS, STALYENKO. I SHOULDA KNOWN IF ANYONE COULD PULL OFF SOMETHIN' LIKE THIS IT'D BE YOU.
YOU HAVE ANY IDEA HOW MUCH OF A STINK YOU'VE MADE DOWN AT THE UN?
"FROM WHAT I HEAR, THE INHUMANS HAVE SENT THAT WEIRDO KID, MENDICUS, BACK TO PETITION THE SECURITY COUNCIL.
"POOR LITTLE TYKE HAS NO IDEA HOW IT ALL WORKS, THOUGH -- HE'S STILL LOOKING FOR SOME KIND OF ELEVENTH HOUR DIPLOMATIC RESOLUTION."
AN' I'LL LAY YOU TEN-TO-ONE HE DIDN'T EXPECT ANYONE TO START ASKING QUESTIONS ABOUT THE ALPHA PRIMITIVES...


BUT, MONSIEUR MENDICUS... SURELY YOU UNDERSTAND THAT THE FORCED SERVITUDE OF OTHERS IS A VIOLATION OF HUMAN *RIGHTS* --
HUMAN RIGHTS? BUT WE ARE NOT *HUMAN* --
NEVERTHELESS, YOU CALL YOURSELF *CIVILIZED*, AMBASSADOR, AND YET YOUR PEOPLE CONTINUE THE PRACTICE OF *SLAVERY* -- A PRACTICE ABANDONED BY OUR KIND MORE THAN A CENTURY AGO.
Hehh... I GUESS HE'S FINDING OUT THE HARD WAY -- YOU CAN'T ARGUE WITH *POLITICS*. THEY'LL HAVE HIM CHASING HIS TAIL WELL INTO THE NEXT CENTURY.
SO, ANYWAY... WHAT'S THE NEWS FROM THE FRONT LINE -- ANY LUCK GETTING BEYOND THEIR TELEKINETIC BARRIERS?
Oh, I THINK THEY'RE BEGINNING TO *CRACK*...


BA-KOOM
BA-KOOM
NAHREES, LOOK... NEIFI'S IN TROUBLE. I GOTTA LET HIM KNOW.
DINU, NO... YOU CAN'T GO OUT THERE. THERE ARE NO TELEKINETICS IN THIS SECTION...
WATCH MY BACK...!
BA-KOOM
DINU!!


NEIFI, WHAT HAPPENED?
BA-KOOM
THEY GOT DINU... IT'S PRETTY BAD.
THERE'S NOTHING MORE YOU CAN DO HERE --
-- WE'VE BEEN ORDERED TO FALL BACK BEHIND THE TELEKINETICS.
UNDERSTOOD. I'LL NEED SOME HELP HERE.
uhh...
C'MON, SOLDIER... I'VE GOT YOU.
IT'S ALL RIGHT... JUST HANG ON. YOU'LL BE OKAY...
PLEASE BE OKAY.

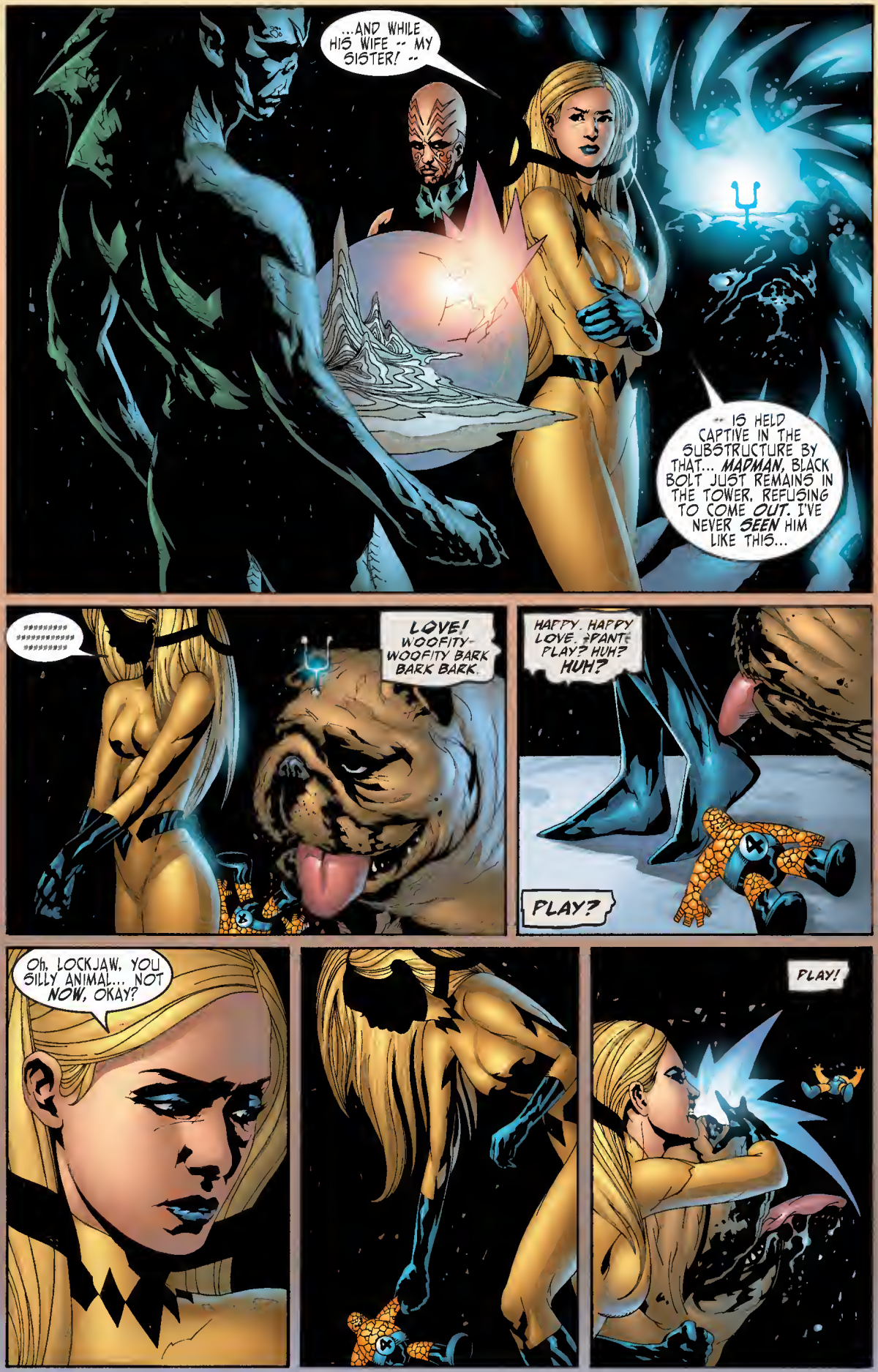

HELP! PLEASE... I NEED SOME HELP OVER HERE!
TOI, I HAVE TO FINISH HERE. GO AND SEE WHAT'S HAPPENED -- HURRY.
I IS HURRY, LADY...
Hhhh... TONAJA... IT HURTS...
Oh, BABY... DON'T CRY. IT'LL BE OKAY.
THIS IS MADNESS.


DOG HUNGRY. GET FOOD.
WHERE IS FOOD?
THERE'S NOTHING LEFT, LOCKJAW.

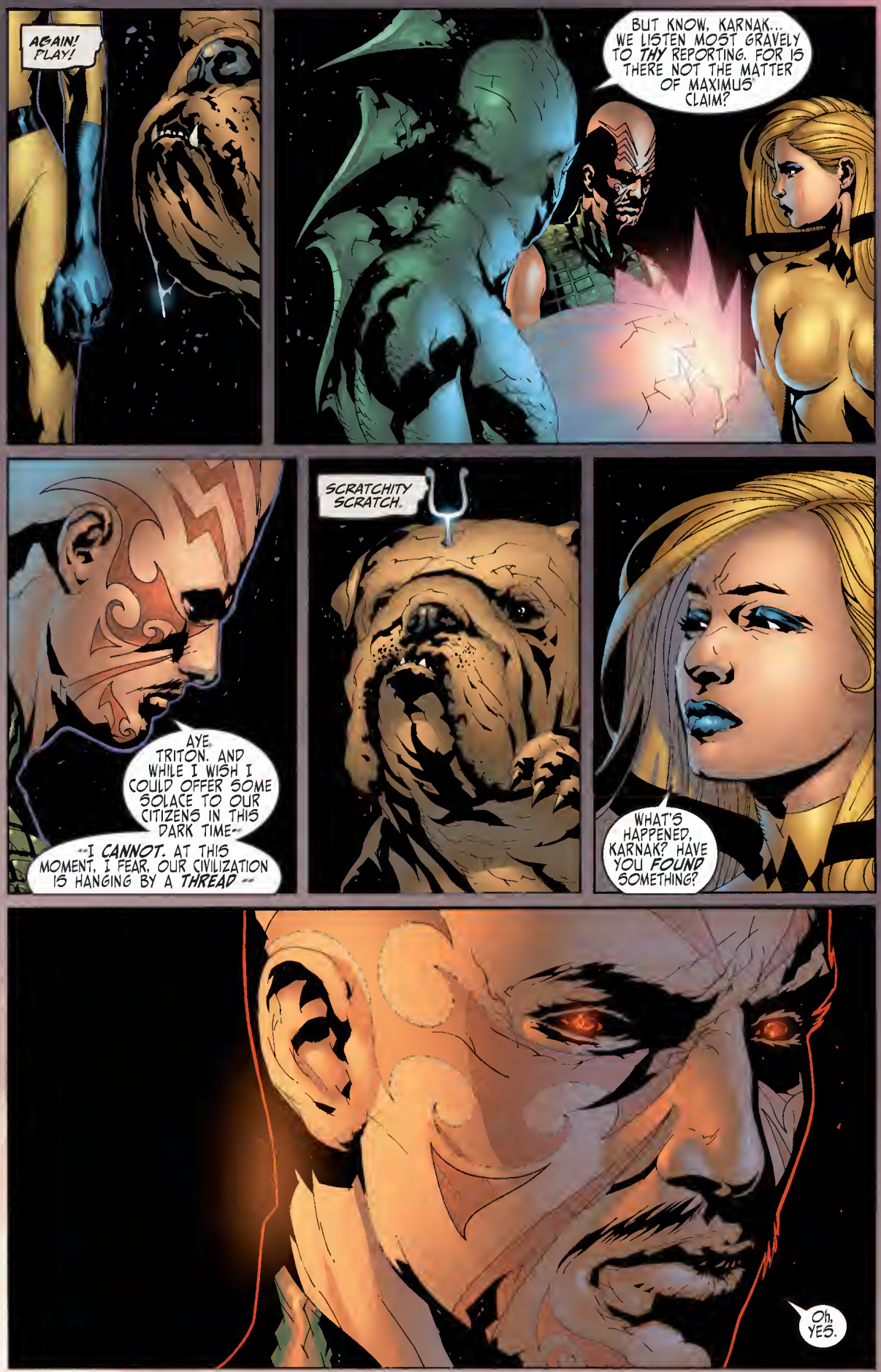

HERE... I SAVED THIS FOR YOU. IT IS ALL THERE'S GOING TO *BE* FOR A WHILE.
MM. CHOMPY FOOD. HAPPY WAG-WAG-WAG.
POOR BEAST... YOU DON'T *UNDERSTAND*, DO YOU? WELL, I'LL GIVE YOU SOME FREE ADVICE...
...DON'T EXPECT IT TO MAKE *SENSE*.
BECAUSE THE WORLD HAS GONE *INSANE*. OUR NOBLE KING FORCES US TO SUFFER IN SILENCE AS THE HUMANS TEAR DOWN OUR PERIMETER DEFENSES AND HIS LUNATIC BROTHER TEARS DOWN THE CITY FROM WITHIN.
IF WE'RE UNLUCKY, WE'LL CHOKE ON THE ATMOSPHERE. IF WE'RE LUCKY, WE'LL SINK BELOW THE SEA. AND THERE'S NOTHING I CAN DO TO *PREVENT* IT.
SOMETIMES, I *ENVY* YOU.

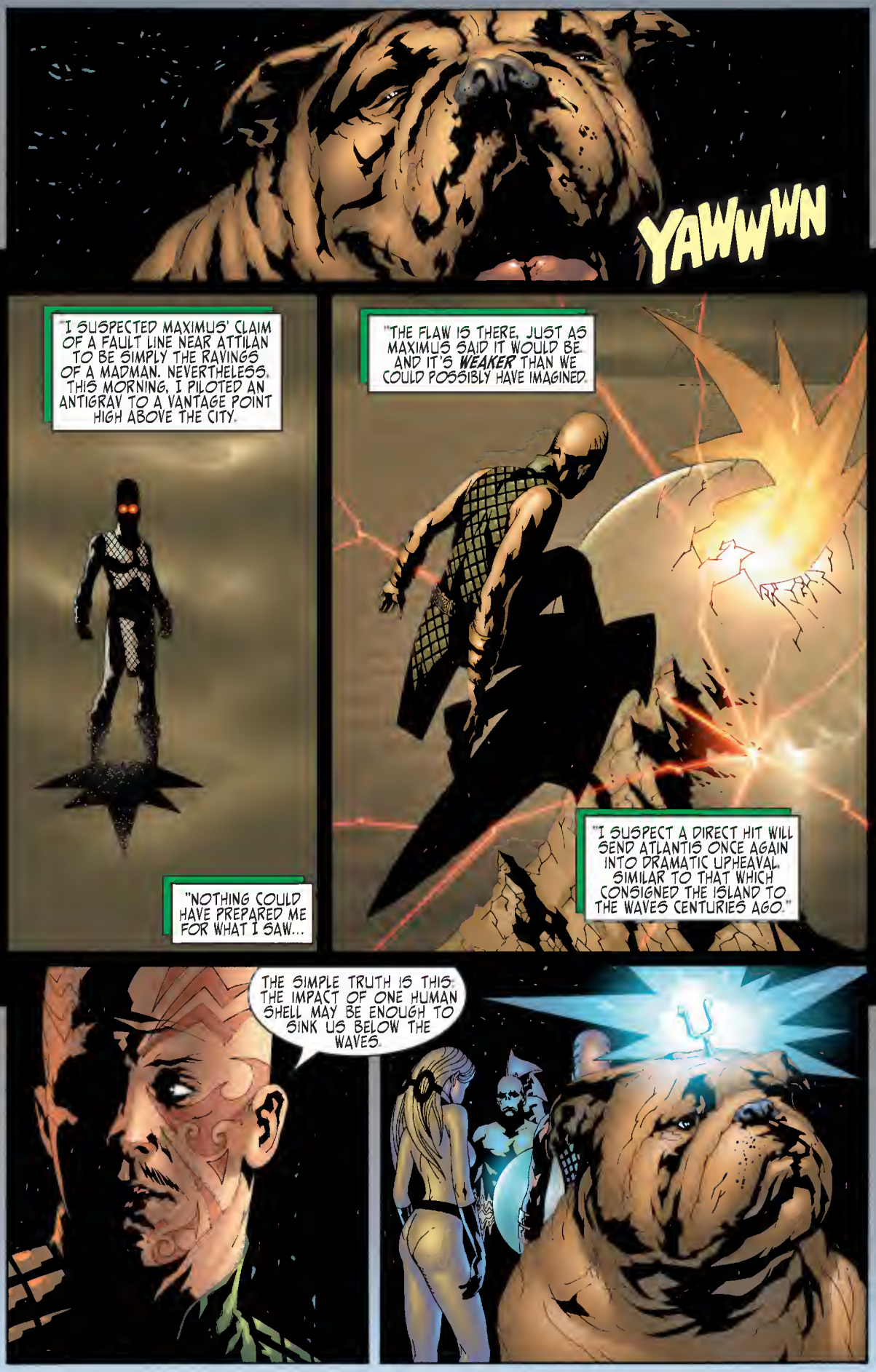

TOY! OH, TOY! TOY TOY TOY!
NRRF WUUF
GOAT PLAY WITH DOG? PLAY? HUH?
GRR... DANGER IN THIS PLACE. BEWARE OF BAD ENEMY HERE
WHERE IS BAD ENEMY?


WELL, WHERE *IS* HE, THEN??
IN *HERE*, LORD MAXIMUS.
ALL ALPHAS ARE BURDENED WITH GREAT SORROW, LORD. WE LAMENT AS ONE, FOR OUR BRAVE COUSIN WOZ IS *DYING*.
HELLO, WOZ. LOOK, I KNOW IT'S AN AWFUL BOTHER, BUT THE LOCALS DOWN HERE REALLY SEEM TO HAVE TAKEN A *SHINE* TO YOU.
A GOOD *MARTYR* IS ABSOLUTELY *PRICELESS* DURING A COUP, SO I'M AFRAID YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE TO REMAIN TRAPPED INSIDE THAT MAKESHIFT ALPHA BODY OF YOURS...
...AT LEAST UNTIL YOU *SNUFF* IT.
I... AM...
...*WOZ*.
THAT'S THE SPIRIT, OLD CHAP. UP THE REVOLUTION. EH?


...AND WHILE HIS WIFE -- MY SISTER! --
-- IS HELD CAPTIVE IN THE SUBSTRUCTURE BY THAT... MADMAN, BLACK BOLT JUST REMAINS IN THE TOWER, REFUSING TO COME OUT. I'VE NEVER SEEN HIM LIKE THIS...
##########
LOVE! WOOFITY-WOOFITY BARK BARK BARK.
HAPPY. HAPPY LOVE. ¿PANTÉ PLAY? HUH? HUH?
PLAY?
Oh, LOCKJAW, YOU SILLY ANIMAL... NOT NOW, OKAY?
PLAY!


THIS IS A TIME OF MUCH EMERGENCY, I FEAR. HUMANS NOW ADVANCE RAPIDLY, MAKING GROUND *HERE*... AND *HERE*. WITH CITY *CONTROLS* LOST TO US, THIS NEWS IS DIRE INDEED.
AGREED. AND YET WE ARE ORDERED TO REMAIN PASSIVE EVEN AS OUR PROTECTIVE DOME DISINTEGRATES AROUND US.
"EVERY CITIZEN IS NOW EXPOSED TO THE TOXICITY IN THE AIR. WE HAVE A COUNTER AGENT, AND WE'VE DEVISED A SYSTEM OF DISTRIBUTION SO THAT EVERY CITIZEN RECEIVES A DAILY SUPPLY.
"BUT THE RESERVES ARE DWINDLING. WITH MAXIMUS CONTROLLING THE SUBSTRUCTURE WE CAN MANUFACTURE NO MORE. AT OUR CURRENT RATE OF USAGE, WE HAVE ENOUGH TO LAST FOUR DAYS AT *MOST*."
IF WE LAST THAT LONG. THE TELEKINETICS ARE OUR LAST LINE OF PASSIVE RESISTANCE, BUT THEY'RE RAPIDLY BEGINNING TO TIRE.
I... I CONFESS, COUSINS...
...IF I DIDN'T KNOW BLACK BOLT ANY BETTER, I WOULD BEGIN TO THINK HE HAS GONE THE WAY OF HIS *BROTHER*.


AGAIN! PLAY!
BUT KNOW, KARNAK... WE LISTEN MOST GRAVELY TO THY REPORTING. FOR IS THERE NOT THE MATTER OF MAXIMUS' CLAIM?
AYE, TRITON. AND WHILE I WISH I COULD OFFER SOME SOLACE TO OUR CITIZENS IN THIS DARK TIME--
--I CANNOT. AT THIS MOMENT, I FEAR, OUR CIVILIZATION IS HANGING BY A THREAD --
SCRATCHITY SCRATCH.
WHAT'S HAPPENED, KARNAK? HAVE YOU FOUND SOMETHING?
Oh, YES.


YAWWWN
"I SUSPECTED MAXIMUS' CLAIM OF A FAULT LINE NEAR ATTILAN TO BE SIMPLY THE RAVINGS OF A MADMAN. NEVERTHELESS, THIS MORNING, I PILOTED AN ANTIGRAV TO A VANTAGE POINT HIGH ABOVE THE CITY.
"NOTHING COULD HAVE PREPARED ME FOR WHAT I SAW...
"THE FLAW IS THERE, JUST AS MAXIMUS SAID IT WOULD BE. AND IT'S ***WEAKER*** THAN WE COULD POSSIBLY HAVE IMAGINED.
"I SUSPECT A DIRECT HIT WILL SEND ATLANTIS ONCE AGAIN INTO DRAMATIC UPHEAVAL. SIMILAR TO THAT WHICH CONSIGNED THE ISLAND TO THE WAVES CENTURIES AGO."
THE SIMPLE TRUTH IS THIS: THE IMPACT OF ONE HUMAN SHELL MAY BE ENOUGH TO SINK US BELOW THE WAVES.


DID YOU HEAR THAT? PERHAPS THEY'VE MADE IT INSIDE THE CITY --
NONSENSE! BLACK BOLT WOULD NEVER ALLOW IT.
BRRAWW!
HERE IS NOISE DOG IS TIRED FIND SLEEPY PLACE, NO NOISE
NO. NO SLEEP HERE.
GRRR
HERE IS BAD ENEMY PLACE.


CENTRAL CITY CONTROL
COMFY, DARLING?


I SWEAR, MAXIMUS, I WILL MAKE SURE THAT YOU PAY FOR THIS IGNOMINY. BLACK BOLT MAY FEEL SORRY FOR YOU, BUT I HAVE NO QUALMS ABOUT MAKING YOU SUFFER. DO YOU HEAR ME?
ANSWER ME!
YOU KNOW, MEDUSA, I'M BEGINNING TO UNDERSTAND WHY MY BROTHER NEVER SAYS ANYTHING -- HE CAN NEVER GET A WORD IN EDGEWISE!
LET ME GO. DO YOU HEAR ME?
OR WHAT? YOU'LL BLUDGEON ME WITH YOUR PREHENSILE HAIRSTYLE?
YOU KNOW, AS ATTRACTIVE A PROPOSITION AS THAT IS, WE'LL HAVE TO SAVE IT FOR ANOTHER TIME, SWEETIE. IF I DON'T CUT IT ALL OFF FIRST!
GO AHEAD, THEN. CUT IT OFF -- IF YOU DARE. BUT YOU DON'T EVEN HAVE COURAGE ENOUGH TO DO THAT, DO YOU?
ALL IN GOOD TIME, HONEY BUNNY. I'D BE DELIGHTED TO MESS WITH YOUR HEAD ANY TIME YOU LIKE...
...JUST AS SOON AS I'M FINISHED MESSING WITH BLACK BOLT'S.






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THE STORY THUS FAR! HAVING DISCOVERED INVADERS IN HIS AFRICAN KINGDOM OF WAKANDA, THE BLACK PANTHER SUMMONED CAPTAIN AMERICA TO HIS HOMELAND WHERE THEY WERE AMBUSHED BY A SPECTER FROM CAP'S PAST!* IT WAS THE HEROES' HISTORIC FIRST MEETING!

Stan Lee PRESENTS:

THAT BUSINESS WITH THE AVENGERS!

CAPTAIN AMERICA -- YOU AND YOUR AFRICAN ALLY ARE STILL SUFFERING THE EFFECTS OF MY HYPNO-LIGHT MISSILE!

YOU ARE OUTNUMBERED A DOZEN TO ONE! YET, YOU STILL PRESUME TO ATTACK ME!

YOUR VAINGLORIOUS ASSAULT IS SUICIDAL! FOR NONE CAN STAND BEFORE THE POWER OF—

CAPTAIN AMERICA & BLACK PANTHER

IN ONE ADVENTURE TOGETHER!

*FOR THE FULL STORY, TAKE OUT A SECOND MORTGAGE AND PICK UP CAPTAIN AMERICA #100! -- J&J

POWER-MAD CHRISTOPHER PRIEST STORY*

JAMMIN JOE JUSKO PENCILS

AMAZIN' AMANDA CONNOR PENCILS PGS 1-5*

JAZZIN' JIMMY PALMIOTTI INKS

VALIANT VINCE EVANS INKS & WASHES

STARTLIN' STARKINGS & COMICRAFT LETTERS

BATTLIN' BRIAN HABERLIN COLORS

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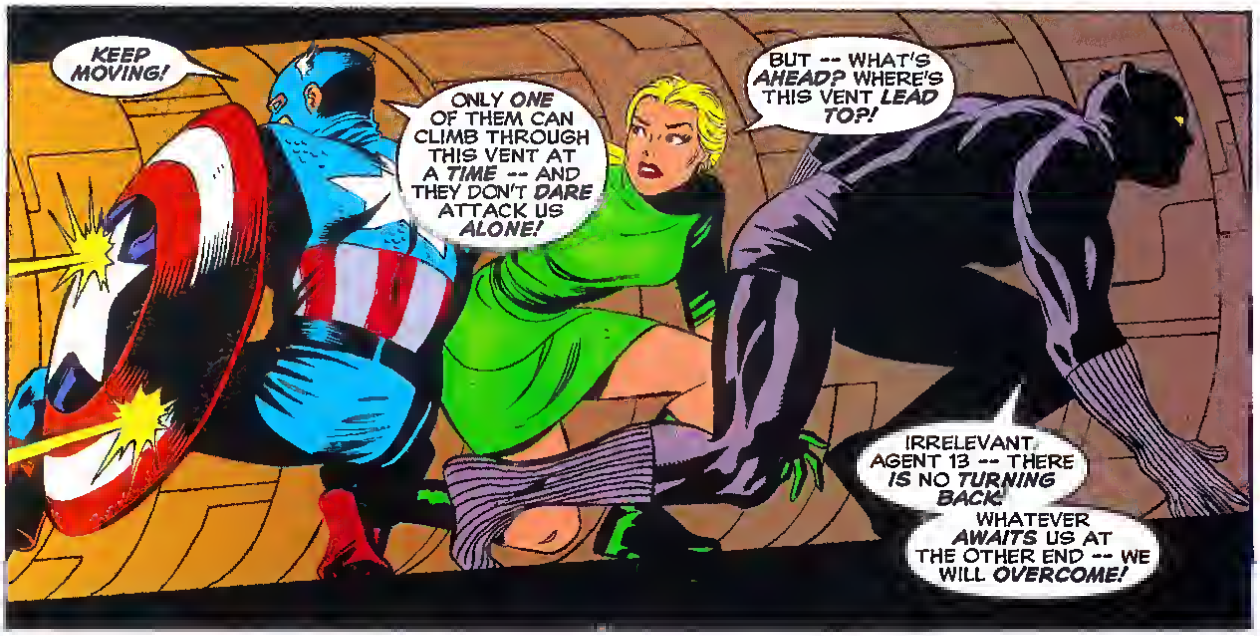
*PAGES 1-5 FREELY ADAPTED FROM CAPTAIN AMERICA #100 BY THE LEGENDARY STAN (THE MAN) LEE AND JACK (KING) KIRBY!

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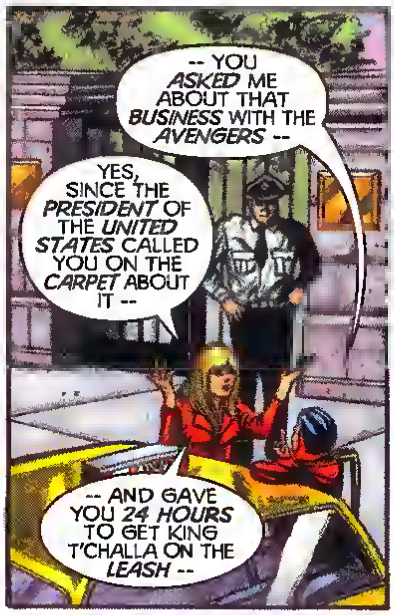
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-- BARON ZEMO!
YES -- BARON ZEMO! CAP'S WWII NEMESIS AND THE FIEND RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DEATH OF HIS YOUNG SIDEKICK BUCKY BARNES!
BACKED BY DOZENS OF HEAVILY ARMED FOOT SOLDIERS -- AND THE EXOTICALLY BEAUTIFUL IRMA KRUHL -- ZEMO HAD SET UP A SECRET BUNKER IN WAKANDA FROM WHERE TO BEGIN --
-- MY REIGN OF TERROR!
BEHOLD THE MOST POTENT WEAPON EVER DEVISED -- MY ORBITING DEATH RAY!
UTILIZING THE LIMITLESS ENERGY OF THE SUN ITSELF, IT BECOMES A GIGANTIC, DEADLY LASER BEAM --
-- WHICH WILL MAKE ME MASTER OF ALL MANKIND!
ZEMO'S NEFARIOUS SCHEME RELIED ON MAJOR DEMONSTRATIONS OF HIS NEW ARCANE POWER!
IRMA KRUHL HAD PROVIDED STOLEN SECRET MISSILE BASE LOCATIONS WHICH ZEMO'S DEATH RAY WOULD OBLITERATE AS PROOF OF HIS FIENDISH WEAPON --
ROSS --
-- WHY ARE YOU TALKING LIKE THAT?
I DON'T KNOW. NOW --
-- AT ZEMO'S COMMAND, THE VENOMOUS IRMA KRUHL ATTEMPTED TO ELIMINATE CAP!
POW! POW!
BAH! THE FEMALE MISSED!
NO MATTER -- ELIMINATE THEM!
WHILE I LAUNCH OUR FIRST ATTACK!
HE MUSTN'T USE THE FLYING DEATH RAY! NO MATTER HOW HOPELESS IT SEEMS --
-- WE HAVE TO STOP HIM!
AGREED! IF -- WE DON'T MAKE IT -- THERE IS NO MAN I WILL BE PROUDER TO DIE WITH!
BUT, BEFORE THE TWO COSTUMED CAPTIVES COULD MAKE ANOTHER MOVE -- THEY SEE --
LOOK! WITHIN IRMA KRUHL'S CASE -- A MINIATURIZED FLAME-THROWER!
AND NOW, ZEMO -- IT IS MY TURN --!
KLIK!
SNAP!

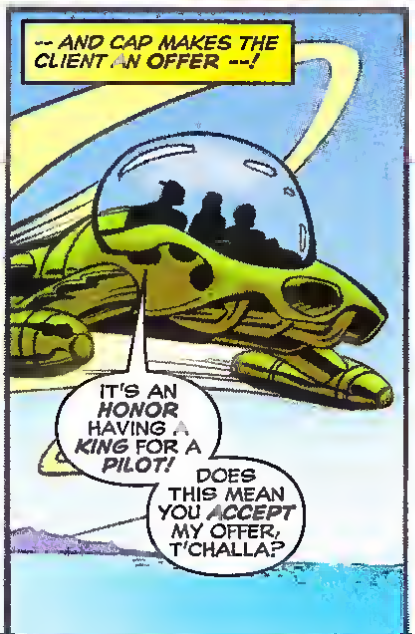

NOOOO--!
SPLASSKK!
KRUHL'S SUDDEN ATTACK DESTROYED ZEMO'S CONSOLE -- RENDERING HIS ORBITING DEATH RAY USELESS!
AS IT TURNED OUT, "KRUHL" WAS ACTUALLY A S.H.I.E.L.D. AGENT IN DISGUISE --
-- WHO, IN SHORT ORDER, FOUND HERSELF SURROUNDED BY THE EVIL HORDE --
-- AND THE TWO STALWARTS OF LIBERTY ZEMO HAD SWORN TO DESTROY!
ALL RIGHT, GENTLEMEN -- IF YOU'VE GOT ANY CARDS LEFT TO PLAY --
-- NOW WOULD BE THE TIME!
WE'VE SHAKEN MOST OF THE EFFECTS OF ZEMO'S HYPNO-LIGHT MISSILE, AGENT 13 --
-- BUT EVEN SO, THERE ARE TOO MANY TO FIGHT --!
EVEN IF WE FAIL -- IT WAS WORTH IT! WE'VE CRUSHED ZEMO'S THREAT TO ALL MANKIND!
DON'T TALK ABOUT FAILING, AGENT 13 -- WE'RE ALL GOING HOME!
WELL, BOYS, I'M ALL EARS -- BUT I DON'T SEE ANY WAY --
WWHAAKK!
THERE'S ALWAYS A WAY!


KEEP MOVING!
ONLY ONE OF THEM CAN CLIMB THROUGH THIS VENT AT A TIME -- AND THEY DON'T DARE ATTACK US ALONE!
BUT -- WHAT'S AHEAD? WHERE'S THIS VENT LEAD TO?!
IRRELEVANT, AGENT 13 -- THERE IS NO TURNING BACK.
WHATEVER AWAITS US AT THE OTHER END -- WE WILL OVERCOME!


AND THIS HAS EXACTLY WHAT TO DO WITH MY QUESTION --?
CONTEXT, NIKKI --


-- YOU ASKED ME ABOUT THAT BUSINESS WITH THE AVENGERS --
YES, SINCE THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES CALLED YOU ON THE CARPET ABOUT IT --
-- AND GAVE YOU 24 HOURS TO GET KING T'CHALLA ON THE LEASH --


-- OR YOU'RE OFF TO ICELAND!
NEVER HAPPEN. ALL RIGHT -- SUFFICE IT TO SAY ZEMO LOST --
-- BUT I SEE THAT'S ENOUGH DETAIL FOR YOU, OKAY -- SO THE CLIENT'S GIVING CAP AND THE SHIELD CHICK A LIFT HOME --


-- AND CAP MAKES THE CLIENT AN OFFER --!
IT'S AN HONOR HAVING A KING FOR A PILOT!
DOES THIS MEAN YOU ACCEPT MY OFFER, T'CHALLA?


SINCE I AM NO LONGER ON ACTIVE DUTY WITH THE AVENGERS, THEY HAVE A VACANCY IN THEIR ROSTER --
-- ONE WHICH I HOPE WILL BE FILLED BY -- THE PANTNER!
I WISH TO CONSIDER IT, MY FRIEND --


-- CONSIDER IT VERY CAREFULLY...
ON THE STRENGTH OF CAP'S SPONSORSHIP, THE CLIENT DID JOIN THE AVENGERS --
-- WHICH, OF COURSE, LED US TO OUR CURRENT MESS...

LIZARD, LIZARD, LIZARD...



A World War II legend, Captain America was flash frozen and presumed dead for more than 40 years until the Sub Mariner fished him out of the ocean. So, now we've got a guy running around with a flag on his chest spouting nonsense about truth and justice in a world where presidents spend millions of dollars arguing the meaning of the word "is," and G. Gordon Liddy is a radio host.

Here's a guy who, by rights, should be suffering this living death, but somehow he manages to keep the little wings on his hat. And you know what? His optimism is INFECTIOUS. You can't be around him more than a minute without humming anthems.

Moments before, Cap and the Avengers happened by the client's little slash-a-thon with Kraven the Hunter, and they'd accompanied him back to the Waldorf Astoria, where a crowd estimated at nearly 100,000 had gathered to get a glimpse of the Wakandan king.




SENATOR RAKIM -- YOU DID THIS. YOU BROUGHT THESE PEOPLE HERE -- KNOWING THE MAYOR WOULD REACT --
T'CHALLA -- WE'VE KNOWN EACH OTHER SINCE COLLEGE, SO YOU KNOW THAT, FAR AS I'M CONCERNED, BLACK PEOPLE HAVE ALWAYS BEEN IN HARM'S WAY.*
ALL I DID WAS INVITE THE UNINVITED. LOOK AROUND -- LOOK HOW PROUD THESE PEOPLE ARE OF YOU --
-- HOW THRILLED THEY ARE TO SEE AN AFRICAN KING. THESE ARE NOT PROTESTORS --
*see issue #6 -- J&J.
--THEY'RE NOT MILITANTS --
-- THEY'RE FAMILIES. NEIGHBORS.
AND NOW LOOK AT HOW THIS WORLD TREATS THEM.
T'CHALLA -- THEY JUST CAME TO SAY "HELLO."
IT IS A MISTAKE TO ANGER ME, SENATOR.
YOU WILL DO WELL TO REMEMBER THAT.
T'CHALLA --
LET HIM GO, CAPTAIN --
-- AFTER ALL, I'VE HAD THIS COMING SINCE COLLEGE.
SINCE NIKKI
GO ON, T'CHALLA -- HIT ME
BECOME EXACTLY WHAT THESE WHITE PEOPLE ALL THINK WE ARE. -- GET THIS PARTY STARTED.
LIEUTENANT, DO YOU HAVE A PHONE?
--?! YES I DO --
IT'S ABOUT TO RING.
IT'LL BE THE PRESIDENT ASKING FOR YOUR COOPERATION.
AND KINDLY ESCORT THE SENATOR TO SAFETY WHILE YOU'RE AT IT.
BLEEP BLEEP BLEEP BLEEP


ALL RIGHT, T'CHALLA -- I'VE BOUGHT US *TEN MINUTES* -- HOW DO WE SEND THEM *HOME?*
WE *DON'T.*
THEY WILL DISPERSE WHEN THEY *FIND* WHAT THEY HAVE *COME FOR. SPEAK* TO THEM
ME --?!
YOU ARE A *LIVING SYMBOL* OF THIS NATION
YES, BUT -- BUT, T'CHALLA --
HOW *MANY* NATIONS *ARE* THERE IN THIS LAND CAPTAIN?
THE *MILITIA* IS HERE BECAUSE OF *FEAR.* THE *NEWS MEDIA* IS HERE BECAUSE OF *HATE.* CAPTAIN -- LET THERE BE AN *END* TO SUCH THINGS
Now, as you recall, I was in the client's limo heading back to the Waldorf with ZURI and the Bopsie Twins.
But traffic became impossible, and, bo GENIUS that I am, I headed out on foot --
'SCUSE ME.
COMIN' THROUGH
ONE SIDE
NOT THE HAIR
A SALAAM ALAKIM.
STATE DEPARTMENT. OFFICIAL BUSINESS. MAKE A HOLE, PEOPLE. LET'S GO --
-- *MMPFF* --!
HEYY--!
-- only to get a faceful of Asgardian BUTT for my trouble...


...Ah...

MEET THE FLINTSTONES



They called themselves the AVENGERS, which I had always assumed was Greek for "Gaudily Dressed Borderline Fascists." I always wondered who appointed THESE guys to "avenge" me: a group of people, unelected, unregulated, and powerful enough to level entire cities. The Village People with repulsor rays. If I could've figured out what made THESE people any different from any other radical militia group, black militant organization, rogue X-Mutants, or the moral right wing, I'd have probably had less problems with the obscenity of New York's mayor grinningly supporting THEM while aiming GUNS at his own citizens.

Years ago, the client was an active member of the Avengers and, having gotten to know the client a little over these past weeks, the question that came to mind was --



-- why? I mean, why would a king leave his throne to pal around with Keptin Kourageous and Minit Moose?



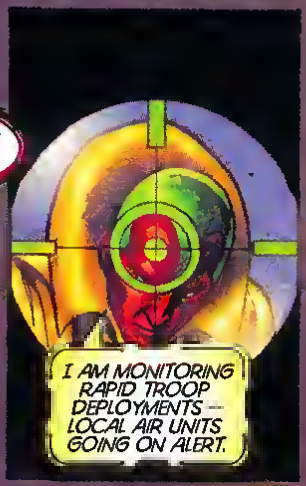
-- I mean, who could be SURE whose SIDE these people were on? And, remember, the client's cat suit was largely ceremonial. It was a badge of OFFICE --

-- not the expression of some chronic self-delusion. The client was never a "super" hero, and yet, for reasons known only to HIM, he joined these avenging types.

Of course, by the end of the day, I KNEW why.

Cap was the one who sponsored the client's membership, largely on the strength of their battle against Zemo. He and the client shared a bond of implicit, immutable trust that had never been broken --










-- until THAT DAY.
...THE KING OF WAKANDA HAS BEEN MY CLOSE FRIEND AND ALLY FOR MANY YEARS. I VALUE HIS FRIENDSHIP TO MYSELF AND TO OUR GREAT NATION...
THIS IS KIMOYO.
IT IS TIED INTO SEVERAL GLOBAL POSITIONING SATELLITES WHICH I HAVE ORDERED TRAINED ON THIS AREA TO WARN AGAINST SNIPERS.
AS I AM CERTAIN YOU ALREADY KNEW.
YOU WANTED MY ATTENTION, AND NOW YOU CERTAINLY HAVE IT.
SPEAK YOUR MASTER'S NAME, AND YOU SHALL LIVE.
REMAIN SILENT, AND YOU SHALL SURELY DIE.
IDLE THREATS, UKATANA! FOR SURELY, YOU WOULD NOT KILL --
...T'CHALLA HAS NEVER BEEN A MAN TO STAND ON CEREMONY -- SO, AT TIMES, IT'S EASY TO FORGET HIS OFFICIAL STANDING... I AGREE THIS RECEPTION WAS LONG OVERDUE.
-- THE WOMAN YOU LOVE --?
--?!?
-- MONICA --!
MONICA-- NO.
BLAAMM


KERRRAAAKKK
MR. ROSS? PLEASE HOLD FOR THE PRESIDENT.
WHY?
--?! SIR?
LOOK, LADY -- I WORK IN WASHINGTON
NOW, THE PRESIDENT CALLS YOU, SAY, AT THE BARBER SHOP --
-- MAYBE HE WANTS A FOURTH FOR GOLF.
THE PRESIDENT CALLS YOU WHEN YOU'RE KNEE DEEP IN MINORITIES --?
-- WHOM THE MAYOR HAS STUPIDLY TRAINED GUNS ON --?
THAT THERE'S YOUR CLASSIC ADIOS CALL.
M'AM -- I'M CIRCLING A DRAIN HERE, AND I DON'T MUCH FEEL LIKE HOLDING FOR ANYBODY --
--?!
...Ah...
UNLOADED


Yep.
Adios Muchacho.
BWAAMMF BWAAMMF BWAAMMF
GAS 'EM --!
THEY -- THEY'RE SHOOTING --!
THE COPS ARE SHOOTING --!
THEY'RE CHARGING --!
THIS IS IT --!
NO --!
KERAAKK
WANDA -- WANDA --!
BLAST -- PEOPLE PRESSING AGAINST ME! NEVER TRIED POWERING UP UNDER THESE CONDITIONS -
-- I MIGHT ACCIDENTALLY KILL SOME ONE!
VISION --!
VISION -- YOU'VE GOT TO FIND WANDA -- I'VE LOST HER --
AS HAVE I, WONDER MAN...
MY SCANS ARE INCONCLUSIVE...
VISION -- PATCH INTO THE POLICE BAND AND TELL THEM TO CEASE FIRE!
ACKNOWLEDGED, CAPTAIN AMERICA.


I WAS ACTUALLY PLANNING TO HAVE HER SHOOT YOU DURING YOUR SPEECH.
WHAAMM
THEN YOU DIDN'T MAKE A SPEECH. HOW RUDE.
VERY WELL, I SHALL MAKE ONE, THEN.
ACHEBE!
WHO ELSE, DEAR BOY?
THE EXO-SKELETON I'VE PLACED ON MS. LYNNE IS MORE THAN ADEQUATE TO CRUSH THE LIFE OUT OF YOU --
...AND I AM PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE MY ENGAGEMENT TO MONICA LYNNE.
LET ALL OF THE WAKANDA'S REJOICE AND WELCOME HER INTO THIS, HER NEW FAMILY!
<CHOKE>
I WAS SO MOVED -- I HAD TO SEND AN ENGAGEMENT GIFT --
20 BARS OF C4 TAPED TO MS. LYNNE'S EXQUISITE BACK.
MY U.S. -- BASED AGENTS HAVE ALSO PLANTED A LEVEL 6 INCENDIARY DEVICE ON ONE OF THE PATHETIC, MEWLING IDIOTS WHO CAME TO SEE YOU --
CAN THE BRAVE UKATANA FIND THE NEEDLE IN THE PAPER CLIP FACTORY... EXCUSE ME... YOU THERE -- MORE GORDITAS!
00:04:39
00:04:21
00:04:15
-- BUT WHAT FUN WOULD THAT BE?
SSSLURP!
IMAGINE HOW TOUCHED I WAS TO FIND THIS IN THE VIDEO ARCHIVES --
-- ONE IN A FLEEING CROWD OF THOUSANDS!


CAP -- CAN YOU HEAR ME --?
I CAN TRY AND CLEAR MORE PATHS FOR THE CROWD TO MOVE IN -- I'M NOT SURE WHAT ELSE I CAN --
MOVE AT DIAGONALS TO THE CROWD, FIRESTAR -- IN YOUR CURRENT POSITION --
-- YOU'RE CHASING THEM. RECON THE AREA AND FIND THAT SNIPER!
I'M TRYING TO KEEP THE RIOT COPS FROM OVERREACTING!
IRON MAN -- REPORT.
IN A HELL OF MY OWN MAKING, CAP, CAN'T GET AIRBORNE WITHOUT MY BOOT JETS HARMING THESE PEOPLE --
-- SO I'VE BEEN USING MINIMUM POWER FORCE FIELD TO STOP THE STAMPEDE --
-- ONLY, THE CROWDS BEHIND THEM CONTINUE PUSHING FORWARD -- THE PEOPLE IN FRONT ARE BEING CRUSHED.
IF I DROP THE FIELD NOW, THE PEOPLE IN FRONT WILL BE TRAMPLED BY THE CROWD PUSHING BEHIND THEM.
HAVE TO ADMIT -- THIS IS NOT EXACTLY SOMETHING WE'VE TRAINED FOR
A MIRACLE WOULD COME IN HANDY RIGHT ABOUT NOW --
FRESH OUT OF MIRACLES, IRON MAN -- HOW ABOUT --
-- A SIMPLE HEX, INSTEAD --
-- IMPROBABLY CAUSING THE IONIZED GAS IN YOUR BOOT JETS TO REVERSE POLARITY --
-- BUCKLING THE SUPPORT BEAMS OF THE SUBWAY BENEATH US!
LET'S CONGRATULATE EACH OTHER LATER, FOLKS --
-- WE NEED TO SET UP A SERIES OF SPEED BREAKERS -- MOVE WITH THE CROWD AND NOT AGAINST IT.
START TOWARDS THE REAR AND WORK FORWARD SO THE PEOPLE IN FRONT WON'T BE TRAMPLED --
CAPTAIN, IF I MAY INTERRUPT --
GO AHEAD, PANTHER.


SOMEONE IN THE CROWD IS UNWITTINGLY WEARING A HIGH-YIELD EXPLOSIVE DEVICE.
IT WILL LEVEL 10 SQUARE BLOCKS.
THE DETONATOR IS BEING FED A CONTINUOUS SIGNAL, CARRIED ON A MICROWAVE FREQUENCY.
WHEN THE COUNTER REACHES ZERO THE SIGNAL WILL STOP --
I THINK I GET YOUR POINT, T'CHALLA. MAINTAIN THIS OPEN CHANNEL --
IRON MAN --
WAY AHEAD OF YOU, CAP.
IF THE VISION AND I SET UP A LIMITED AREA RADIO TRAP -- SCREEN OUT ALL LOCAL COMM. TRAFFIC EXCEPT AVENGERS FREQUENCY --
-- THAT SHOULD CREATE A RADIO DEAD ZONE AROUND THE FLEEING CROWD.
EXCUSE ME? IT'S UP TO ME --?!?
AND THEN IT WILL BE UP TO --
-- FIRESTAR


Ah, UKATANA...
...I HAD NOT PLANNED FOR YOUR AVENGING COHORTS!
MANY OF YOUR PEOPLE HAVE ASKED WHY, UKAT --
-- WHY YOU LEFT YOUR THRONE TO JOIN THE AMERICAN HEROES
WHY, IN EVERY PHOTOGRAPH THESE "AVENGERS" HAVE THE KING OF THE REALM STANDING IN BACK.
THEY DO NOT EVEN HONOR YOU BY ADDRESSING YOU AS KING.
I HARDLY OWE ANSWERS TO THE USURPER OF MY RIGHTFUL THRONE --
-- BUT THE AVENGERS ARE MY FRIENDS, AMONG WHOM THERE CAN BE NO ISSUES OF PROTOCOL.
AND, AS FOR WHY --
-- IT SEEMED THE PRUDENT AND REASONABLE THING TO DO --
ALL RIGHT, PEOPLE -- IT'S NOW OR NEVER --!
WE'RE ON IT, CAP.
IRON MAN HAS LOCKED ON TO MY FREQUENCY SPREAD -- THE RADIO DEAD ZONE BEGINS --
-- GIVEN THE POTENTIAL THREAT THESE PEOPLE POSED TO THE KINGDOM --


-- NOW!
-- ACCEPTING THEIR INVITATION AFFORDED ME THE CHANCE TO THOROUGHLY INVESTIGATE THEIR CLAIMS --
?!
DID BLACK PANTHER JUST SAY WHAT I THINK HE SAID --?
FIRESTAR --
-- STAY FOCUSED.
IF THERE IS A CONTINUOUS-FEED MICROWAVE SIGNAL, IT SHOULD STICK OUT LIKE A SORE THUMB --
I... I CAN'T... CAP... I...
...WAIT ...WAIT -- I THINK I SEE HIM --
PANTHER SAID THE DETONATOR WAS BEING FED A MICROWAVE SIGNAL. YOUR POWERS ARE MICROWAVE-BASED --
-- AND VISION AND IRON MAN HAVE SCREENED OUT ALL OTHER RADIO TRANSMISSIONS.
WONDER MAN -- BLUE KNAPSACK --!
I'M ON IT, FIRESTAR!
EXCUSE ME, PAL -- BUT WE THINK YOU MAY BE A LITTLE FISSIONABLE!

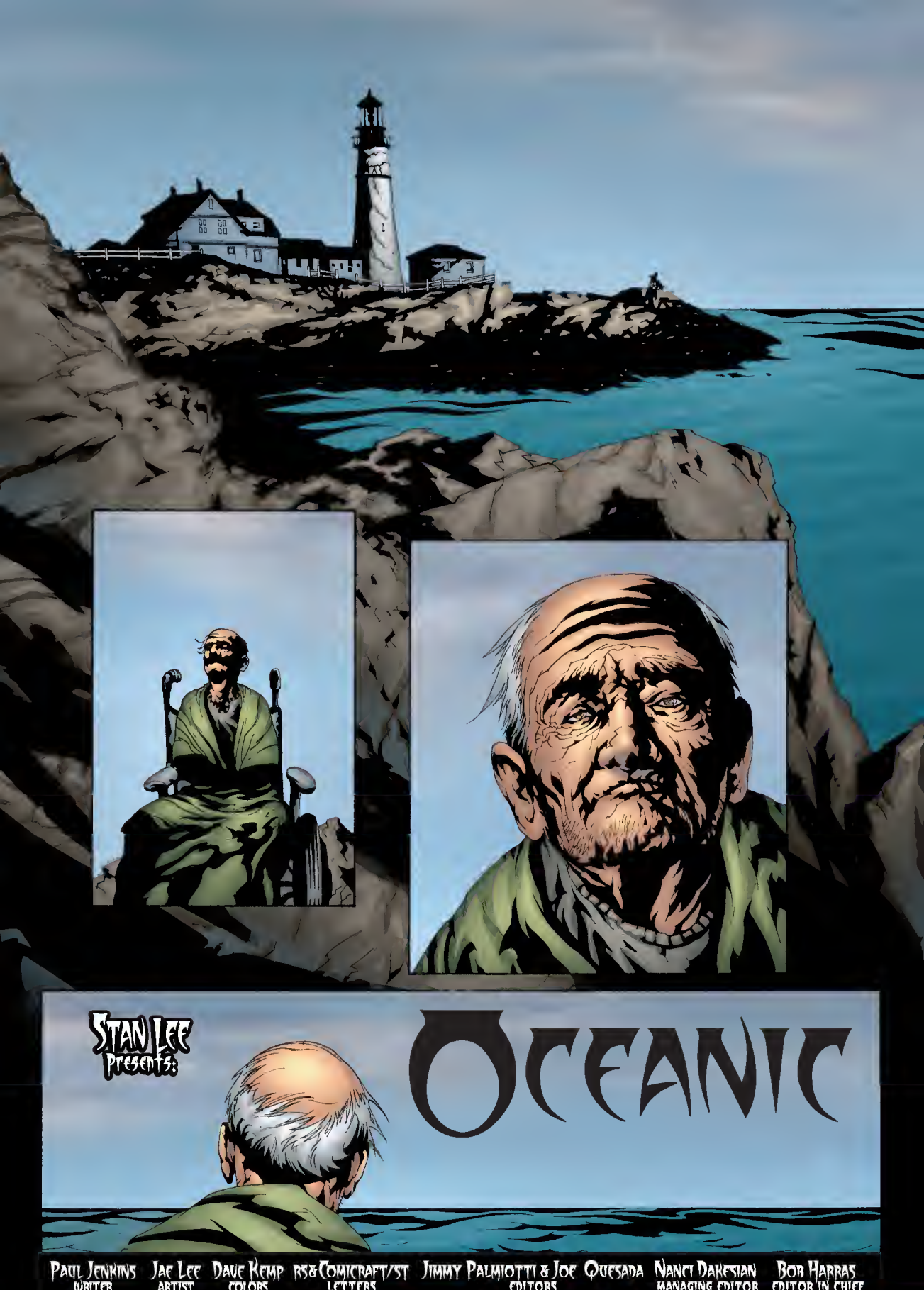

OKAY, PANTHER -- WE'VE DISARMED THE BOMB -- IT'S SAFE TO CUT THE POWER --!
00:00:02
SNIPPT
SO...
...WHO ARE THE GIRLS?
THE... ...GIRLS...?
I'VE SEEN THEM WITH YOU -- TALL LIKE TREES -- MINI SKIRTS --
-- ?/ OKOYE AND NAKIA, YOU'VE SEEN THEM AT THE PALACE
WHEN I SAW THEM THEY WERE FOURTEEN.
THEY... HAVE GROWN.
I SEE YOUR ENEMIES STILL ENJOY USING ME LIKE A HOCKEY PUCK.
I SHOULD THANK YOU FOR SAVING MY LIFE --
-- BUT I PROMISED MYSELF I'D NEVER SPEAK TO YOU AGAIN.
Oh, LOOK -- THERE'S ANOTHER PROMISE I'VE BROKEN.

JAIL HOUSE ROCK




A WHILE AGO KING T'CHALLA ASKED ME HOW *MANY* NATIONS THERE *WERE* HERE IN AMERICA. I STILL BELIEVE THERE'S ONLY *ONE*.
ONE NATION OF *MANY*, *ET PLURIBUS UNUM*
...the Avengers managed to stop the worst riot New York had ever seen.
I AM *ASHAMED* AND *HUMILIATED* AT THE *EVIL* DONE HERE THIS DAY IN MY NAME --
-- FACTIONS WITH A STRANGLEHOLD ON MY *HOMELAND* WILL STOP AT *NOTHING* TO DESTROY ME.
PLEASE DO NOT TAKE YOUR *ANGER* OUT ON THIS CITY -- ON YOUR NEIGHBORS AND FRIENDS WHO HAVE PLAYED *NO ROLE* IN THIS.
I BEG YOU TO EXPRESS YOUR LOVE FOR ME--
...BY *GOING HOME*.
WOW... THAT WAS *AMAZING*, PANTHER.
AND WHAT A *GREAT BLUFF* -- TELLING THAT ACHEBE GUY YOU ONLY *JOINED* THE AVENGERS TO *SPY* ON THEM...
-- ?! BLUFF?!
YOU... SAID YOU THOUGHT THE AVENGERS MIGHT BE A *THREAT* --
-- SO YOU *JOINED* -- TO INVESTIGATE THEM... OR... MAYBE I MISHEARD YOU...
DID WE *ALL* MISHEAR YOU --?
DID SHE --?
NO. YOU DID *NOT*.
NEXT
ENEMY OF THE STATE
THE KING, THE SPY, THE TRAITOR...


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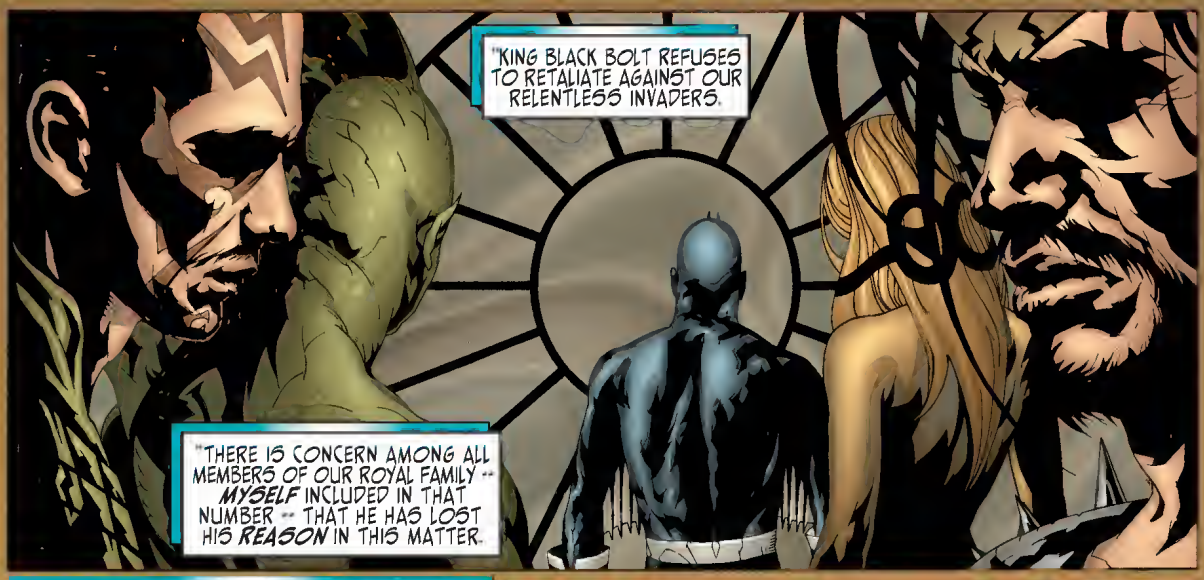
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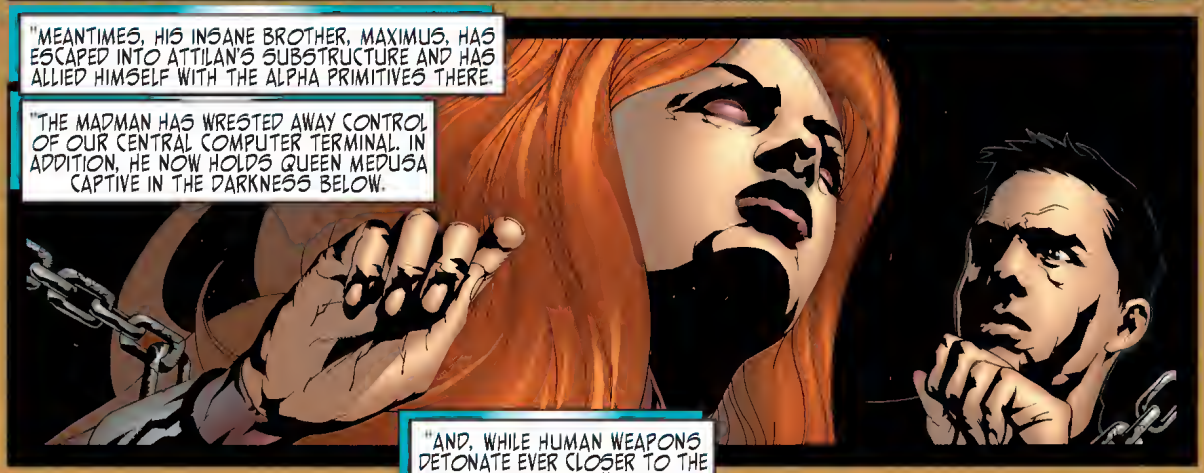
BOB HARRAS
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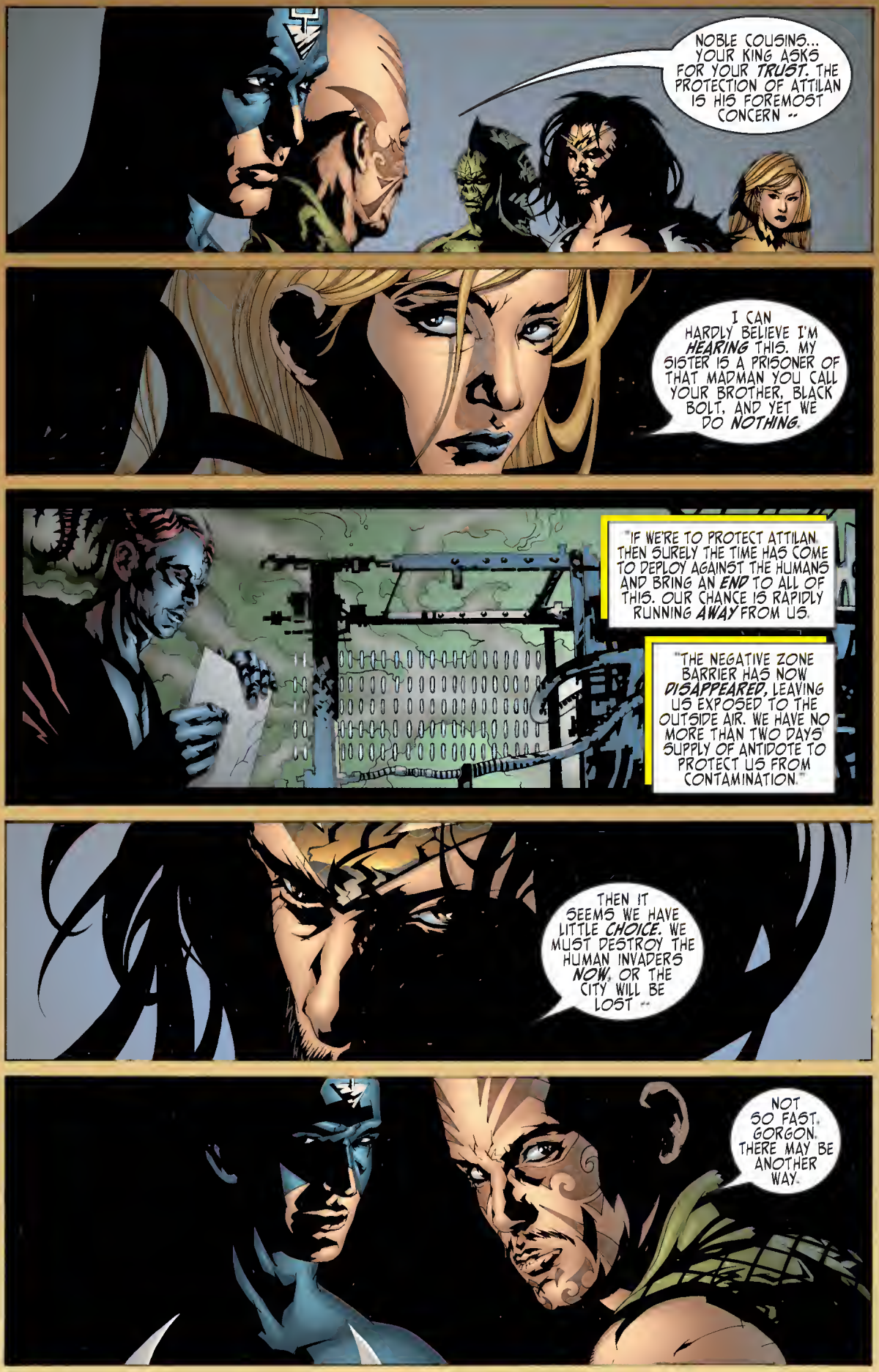

WE MUST SPEAK, YOU AND I.
HERE -- WITH YOU -- MINE WORDS AND THOUGHTS ARE GIVEN CLARITY. SO, I ASK YOU TO FORGIVE ME THIS INTRUSION, OLD FRIEND.
ALAS, YOU FIND ME GREATLY TROUBLED THIS DAY...
"... FOR MY PEOPLE ARE IN GRAVE DANGER.

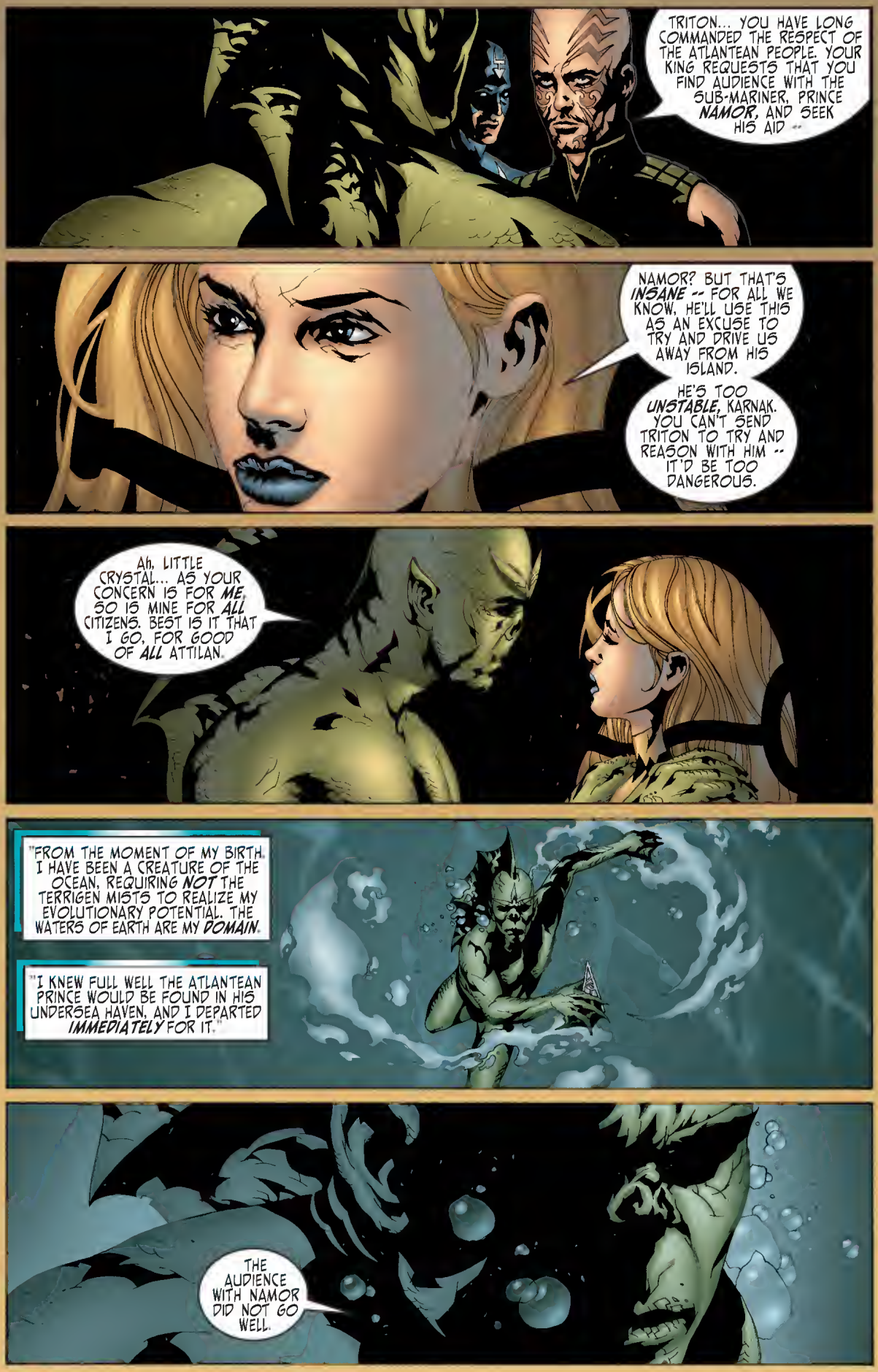

"TO OUR ANCIENT CITY, ATTILAN, HAVE COME *HUMANS*. THEY ATTACK US WITHOUT FEAR OF RETALIATION, AND FIGHT BACK WE DO *NOT*.
"OUR DEFENSIVE BARRIERS -- EVEN THOSE WE HAD ASSUMED TO BE *IMPENETRABLE* -- HAVE BEEN COMPROMISED. THUS, WE ARE NOW EXPOSED TO THE TOXIC AIR OF THE *OUTSIDE*.


"KING BLACK BOLT REFUSES TO RETALIATE AGAINST OUR RELENTLESS INVADERS.
"THERE IS CONCERN AMONG ALL MEMBERS OF OUR ROYAL FAMILY -- *MYSELF* INCLUDED IN THAT NUMBER -- THAT HE HAS LOST HIS *REASON* IN THIS MATTER.

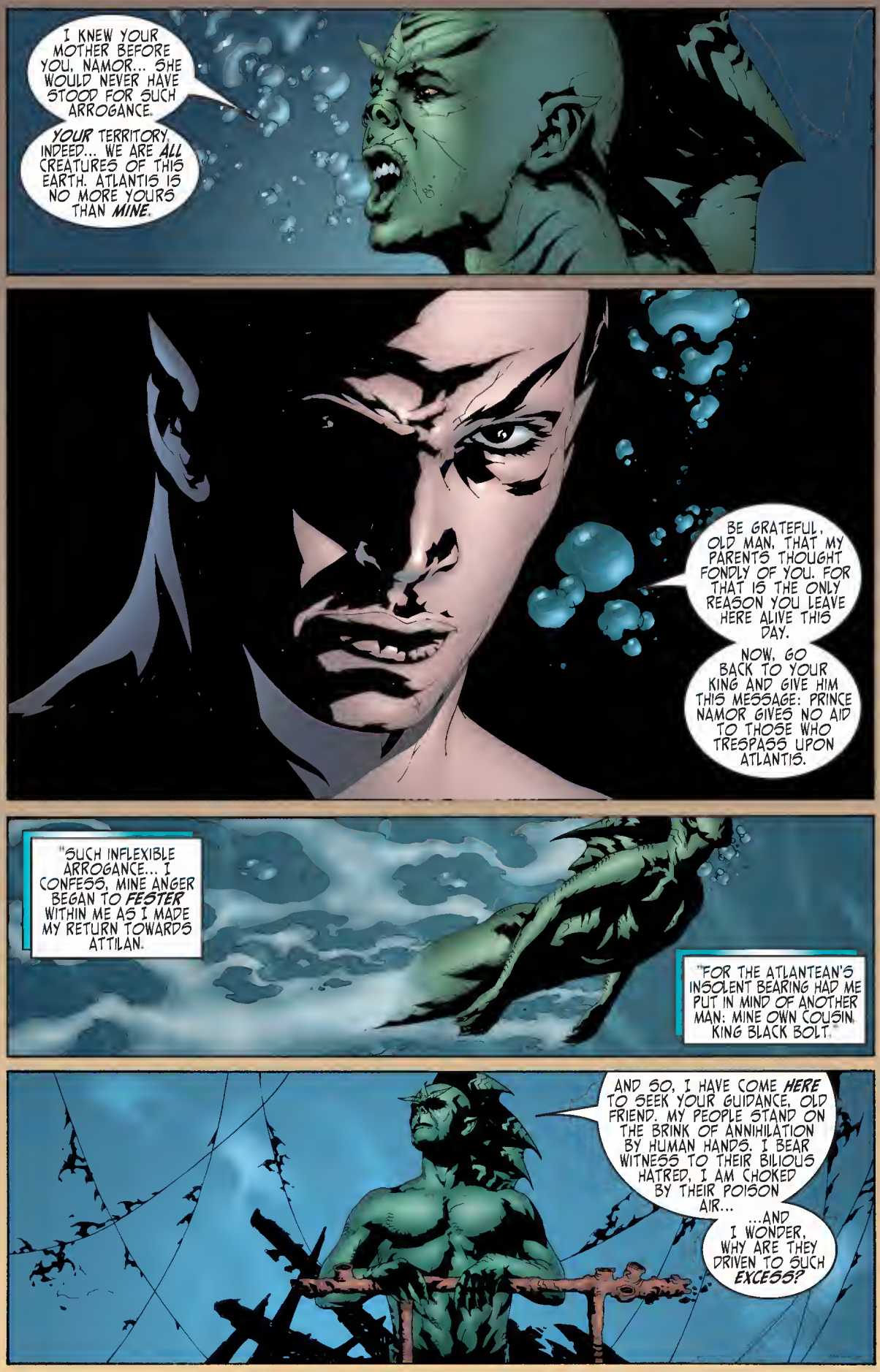

"MEANTIMES, HIS INSANE BROTHER, MAXIMUS, HAS ESCAPED INTO ATTILAN'S SUBSTRUCTURE AND HAS ALLIED HIMSELF WITH THE ALPHA PRIMITIVES THERE.
"THE MADMAN HAS WRESTED AWAY CONTROL OF OUR CENTRAL COMPUTER TERMINAL. IN ADDITION, HE NOW HOLDS QUEEN MEDUSA CAPTIVE IN THE DARKNESS BELOW.

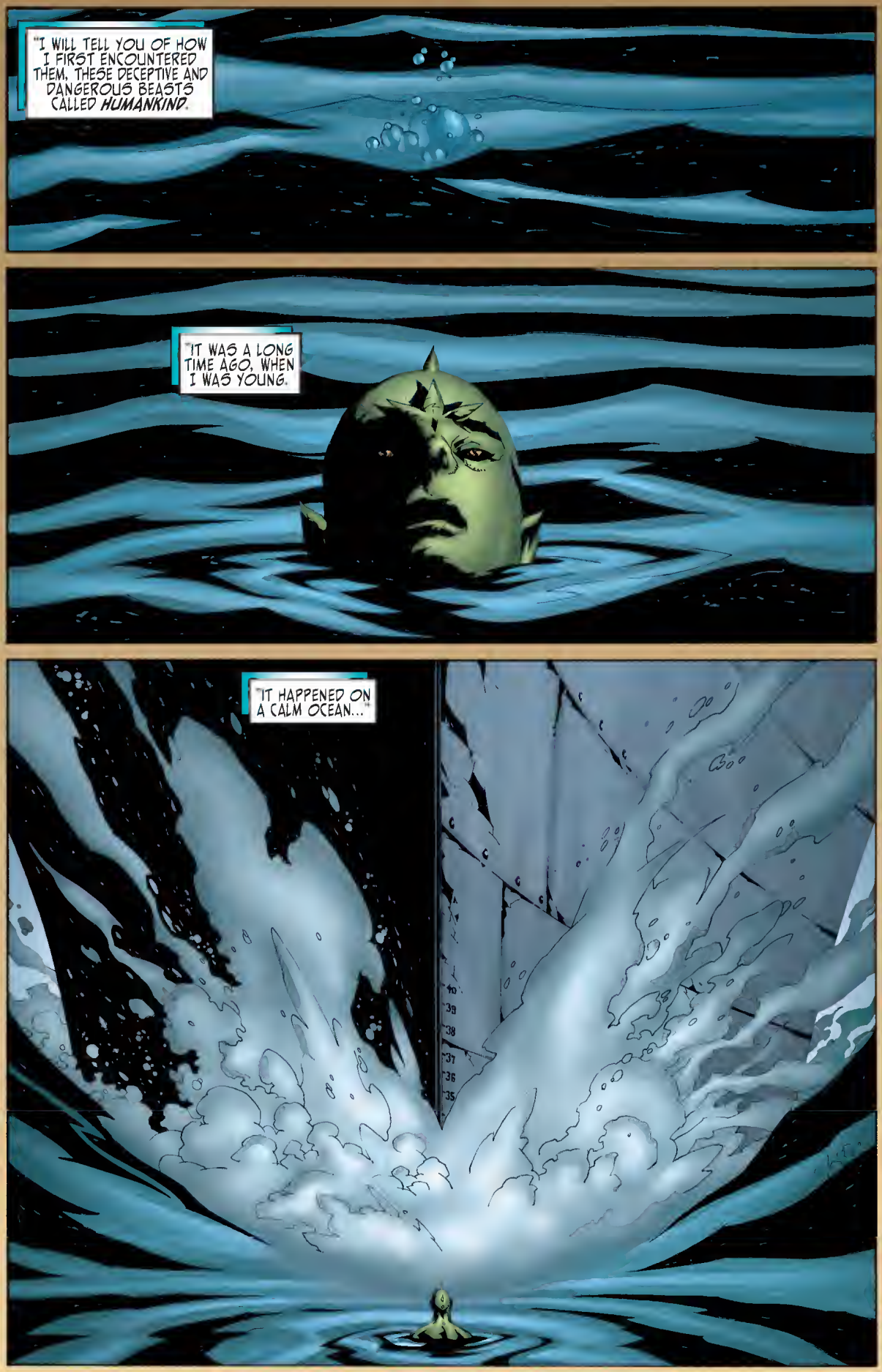

"AND, WHILE HUMAN WEAPONS DETONATE EVER CLOSER TO THE CITY, A GREAT *FLAW* HAS BEEN DISCOVERED -- ONE THAT MIGHT SINK ATLANTIS BELOW THE SEA, AND OUR CITY WITH IT."


NOBLE COUSINS... YOUR KING ASKS FOR YOUR *TRUST*. THE PROTECTION OF ATTILAN IS HIS FOREMOST CONCERN --
I CAN HARDLY BELIEVE I'M *HEARING* THIS. MY SISTER IS A PRISONER OF THAT MADMAN YOU CALL YOUR BROTHER, BLACK BOLT, AND YET WE DO *NOTHING*.
"IF WE'RE TO PROTECT ATTILAN, THEN SURELY THE TIME HAS COME TO DEPLOY AGAINST THE HUMANS AND BRING AN *END* TO ALL OF THIS. OUR CHANCE IS RAPIDLY RUNNING *AWAY* FROM US.
"THE NEGATIVE ZONE BARRIER HAS NOW *DISAPPEARED*, LEAVING US EXPOSED TO THE OUTSIDE AIR. WE HAVE NO MORE THAN TWO DAYS SUPPLY OF ANTIDOTE TO PROTECT US FROM CONTAMINATION."
THEN IT SEEMS WE HAVE LITTLE *CHOICE*. WE MUST DESTROY THE HUMAN INVADERS *NOW*, OR THE CITY WILL BE LOST --
NOT SO FAST, GORGON. THERE MAY BE ANOTHER WAY.

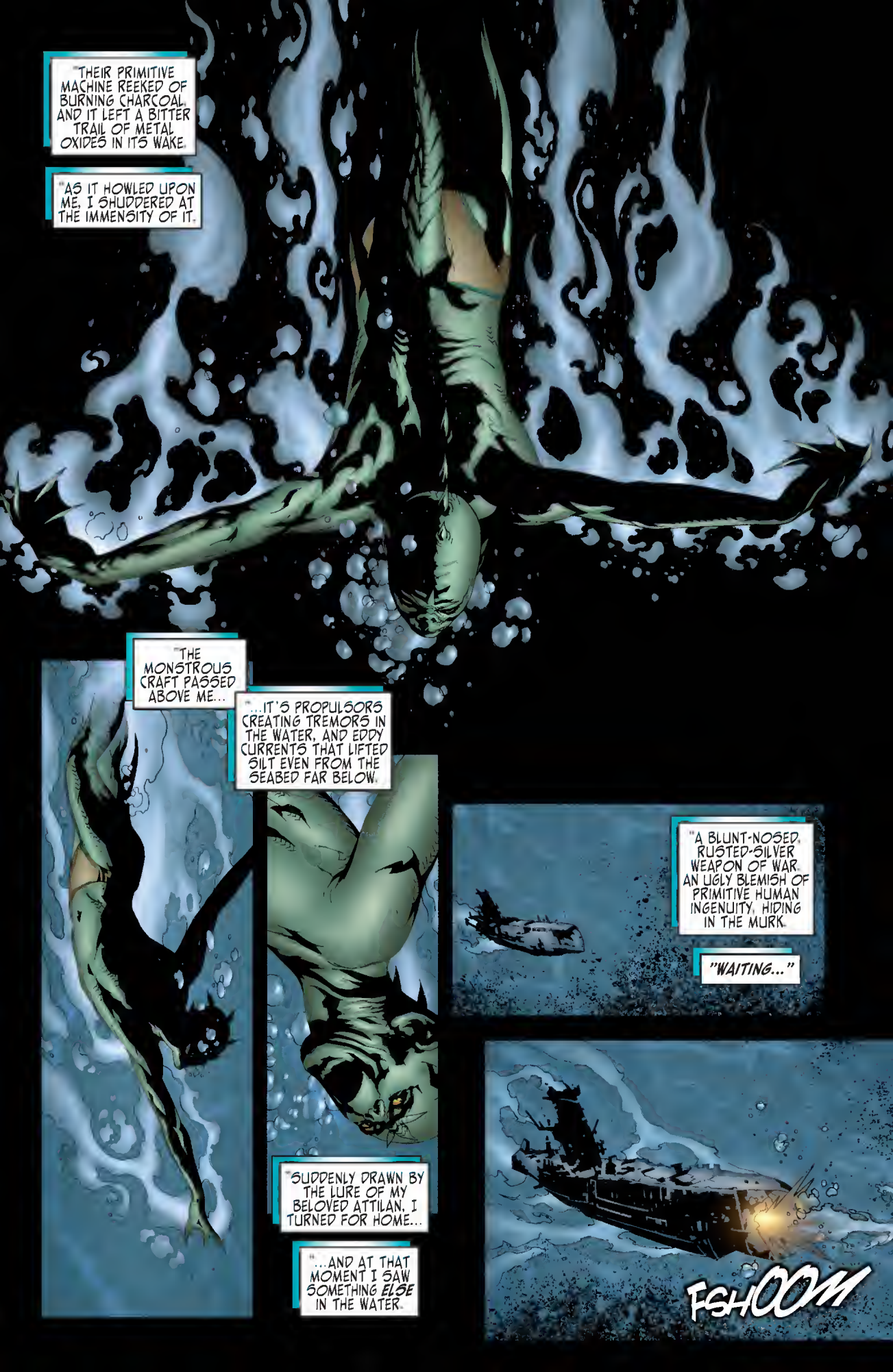

TRITON... YOU HAVE LONG COMMANDED THE RESPECT OF THE ATLANTEAN PEOPLE. YOUR KING REQUESTS THAT YOU FIND AUDIENCE WITH THE SUB-MARINER, PRINCE NAMOR, AND SEEK HIS AID --
NAMOR? BUT THAT'S INSANE -- FOR ALL WE KNOW, HE'LL USE THIS AS AN EXCUSE TO TRY AND DRIVE US AWAY FROM HIS ISLAND.
HE'S TOO UNSTABLE, KARNAK. YOU CAN'T SEND TRITON TO TRY AND REASON WITH HIM -- IT'D BE TOO DANGEROUS.
Ah, LITTLE CRYSTAL... AS YOUR CONCERN IS FOR ME, SO IS MINE FOR ALL CITIZENS. BEST IS IT THAT I GO, FOR GOOD OF ALL ATTILAN.
"FROM THE MOMENT OF MY BIRTH, I HAVE BEEN A CREATURE OF THE OCEAN, REQUIRING NOT THE TERRIGEN MISTS TO REALIZE MY EVOLUTIONARY POTENTIAL. THE WATERS OF EARTH ARE MY DOMAIN.
"I KNEW FULL WELL THE ATLANTEAN PRINCE WOULD BE FOUND IN HIS UNDERSEA HAVEN, AND I DEPARTED IMMEDIATELY FOR IT."
THE AUDIENCE WITH NAMOR DID NOT GO WELL.

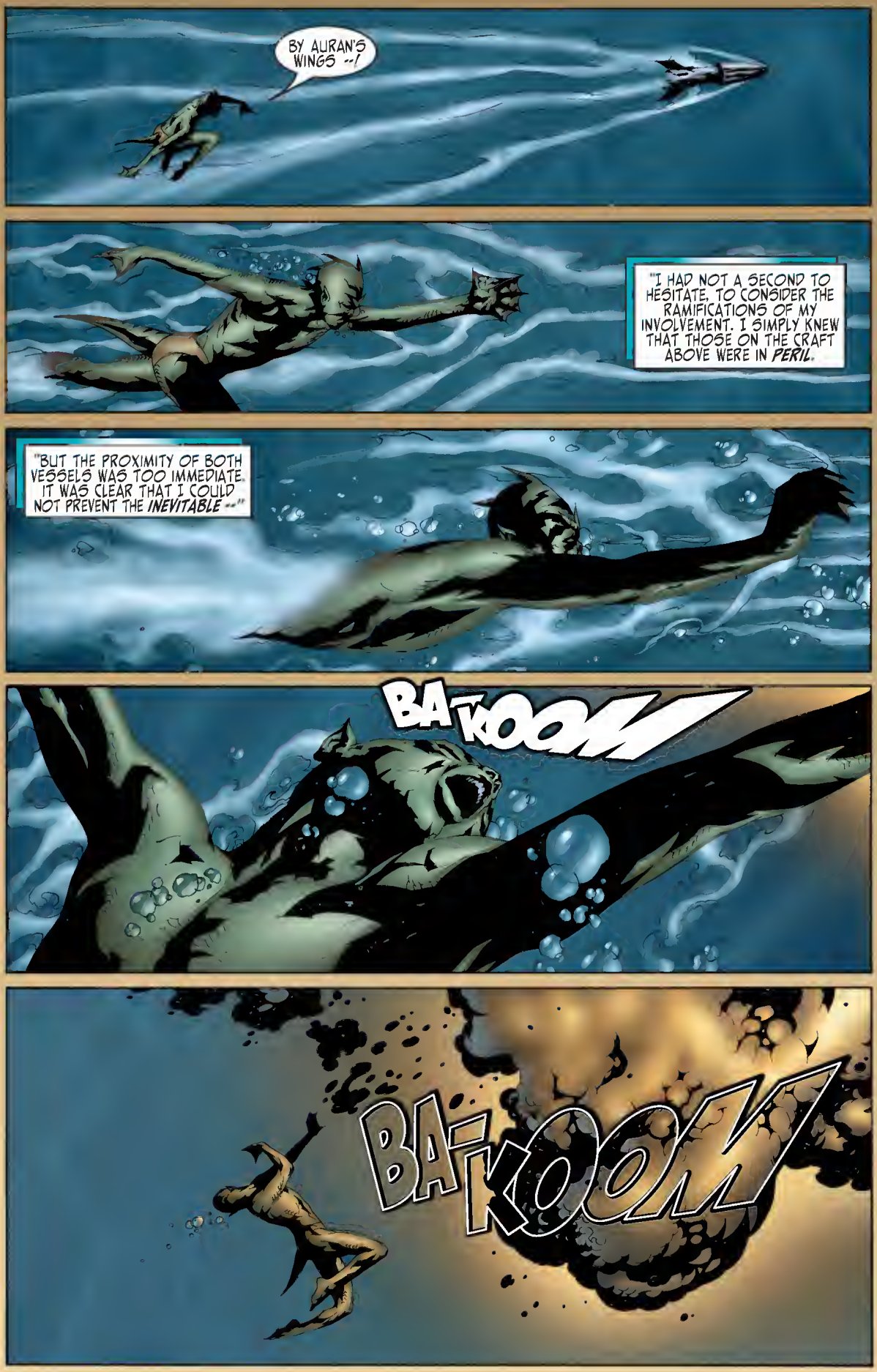

...AND I BRING THIS PERSONAL NOTE FROM KING BLACK BOLT, TOGETHER WITH REGARDS AND RESPECT FROM ALL PEOPLE OF OUR GREAT CITY TO OUR ATLANTEAN COUSINS.
WE ASK THAT YOU *HELP* US IN OUR HOUR OF NEED, PRINCE NAMOR. BY HUMAN STANDARDS, YOU HAVE GOOD *CLAIM* TO THE ISLAND.
PERHAPS WERE YOU TO *REASON* WITH THEM --
YOU CAN TELL YOUR KING *THIS*, TRITON OF ATTILAN:
I CARE NOT FOR THE AFFAIRS OF OTHERS, NEITHER HUMAN NOR INHUMAN. YOUR PEOPLE ARE UNWELCOME *INTRUDERS*.
I SUGGEST YOU TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO REMOVE YOURSELVES FROM MY TERRITORY, WHILE YOU STILL HAVE THE *CHANCE*.


I KNEW YOUR MOTHER BEFORE YOU, NAMOR... SHE WOULD NEVER HAVE STOOD FOR SUCH ARROGANCE.
YOUR TERRITORY, INDEED... WE ARE ALL CREATURES OF THIS EARTH. ATLANTIS IS NO MORE YOURS THAN MINE.
BE GRATEFUL, OLD MAN, THAT MY PARENTS THOUGHT FONDLY OF YOU. FOR THAT IS THE ONLY REASON YOU LEAVE HERE ALIVE THIS DAY.
NOW, GO BACK TO YOUR KING AND GIVE HIM THIS MESSAGE: PRINCE NAMOR GIVES NO AID TO THOSE WHO TRESPASS UPON ATLANTIS.
"SUCH INFLEXIBLE ARROGANCE... I CONFESS, MINE ANGER BEGAN TO FESTER WITHIN ME AS I MADE MY RETURN TOWARDS ATTILAN.
"FOR THE ATLANTEAN'S INSOLENT BEARING HAD ME PUT IN MIND OF ANOTHER MAN: MINE OWN COUSIN, KING BLACK BOLT.
AND SO, I HAVE COME HERE TO SEEK YOUR GUIDANCE, OLD FRIEND. MY PEOPLE STAND ON THE BRINK OF ANNIHILATION BY HUMAN HANDS. I BEAR WITNESS TO THEIR BILIOUS HATRED, I AM CHOKED BY THEIR POISON AIR...
...AND I WONDER, WHY ARE THEY DRIVEN TO SUCH EXCESS?

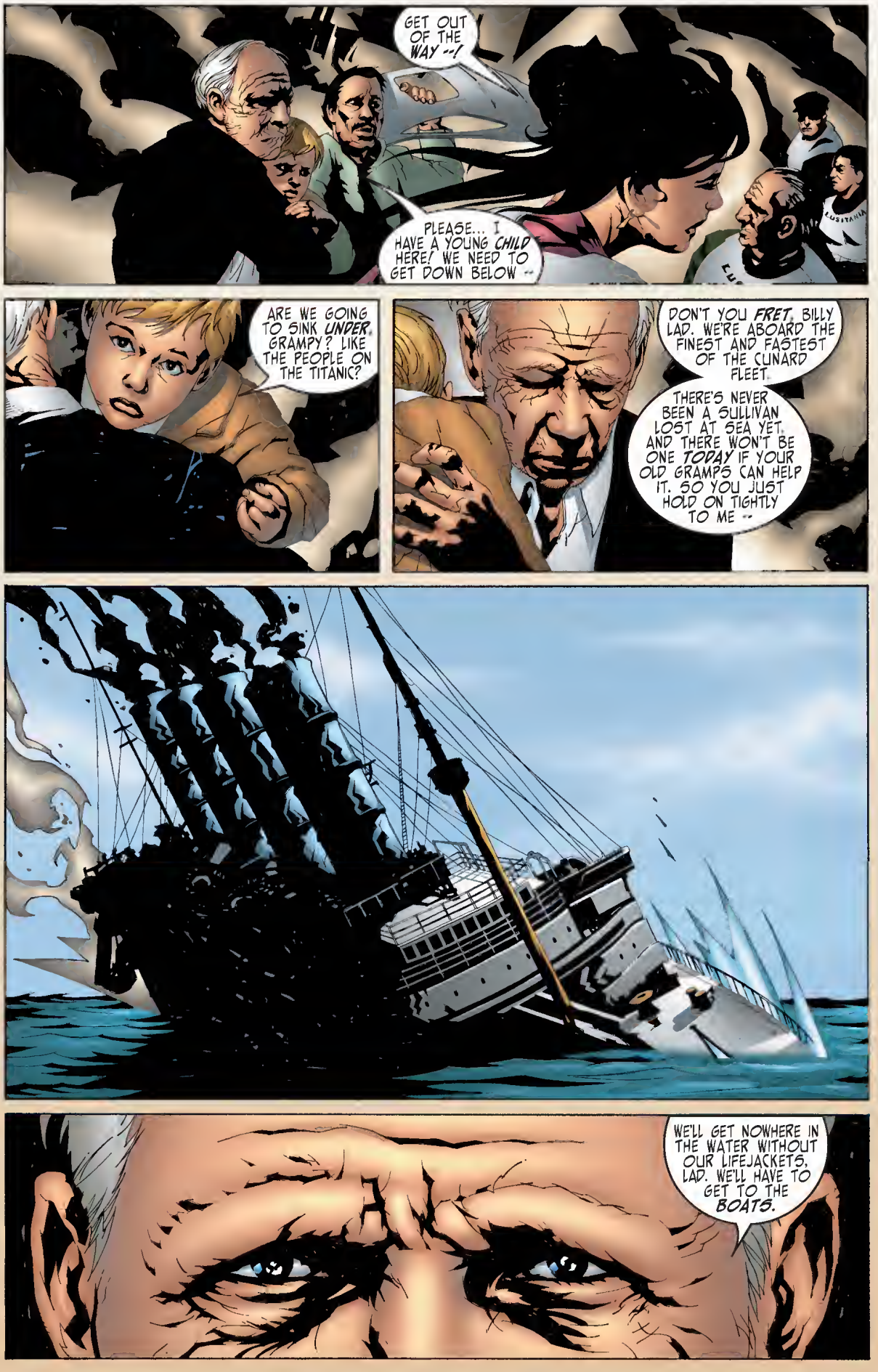

"I WILL TELL YOU OF HOW I FIRST ENCOUNTERED THEM. THESE DECEPTIVE AND DANGEROUS BEASTS CALLED *HUMANKIND*.
"IT WAS A LONG TIME AGO, WHEN I WAS YOUNG.
"IT HAPPENED ON A CALM OCEAN..."


LOOK, GRAMPY... THERE'S ICEBERGS ON THE WATER!
Hehh... THOSE ARE WHITECAPS, BILLY -- THEY'RE THE TOPS OF ALL THE WAVES THAT GO INTO SHORE.
IF YOU LOOK OVER THERE, YOU CAN SEE WHERE THEY'RE GOING. SEE? THAT'S THE OLD HEAD OF KINSALE LIGHTHOUSE.
THAT'S WHERE WE'RE GOING, TOO -- TO SEE YOUR GRAN.
AN' I RECKON YOU'LL BE NEEDING SOMETHING TO IMPRESS HER WITH, A FINE YOUNG MAN LIKE YOU. WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO A WHOLE SHILLING OF YOUR VERY OWN?
A SHILLING! C'N I SPEND IT WHEN WE LAND? CAN I?
AYE, LAD... WHEN WE GET TO IRELAND.
LUSITANIA

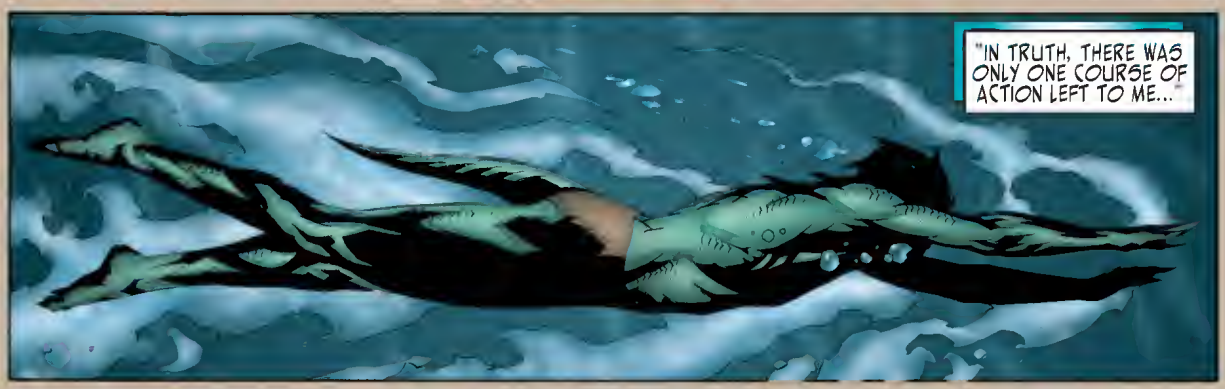

"THEIR PRIMITIVE MACHINE REEKED OF BURNING CHARCOAL, AND IT LEFT A BITTER TRAIL OF METAL OXIDES IN ITS WAKE.
"AS IT HOWLED UPON ME, I SHUDDERED AT THE IMMENSITY OF IT.
"THE MONSTROUS CRAFT PASSED ABOVE ME...
"...IT'S PROPULSORS CREATING TREMORS IN THE WATER, AND EDDY CURRENTS THAT LIFTED SILT EVEN FROM THE SEABED FAR BELOW.
"A BLUNT-NOSED, RUSTED-SILVER WEAPON OF WAR. AN UGLY BLEMISH OF PRIMITIVE HUMAN INGENUITY, HIDING IN THE MURK.
"WAITING..."
"SUDDENLY DRAWN BY THE LURE OF MY BELOVED ATTILAN, I TURNED FOR HOME...
"...AND AT THAT MOMENT I SAW SOMETHING *ELSE* IN THE WATER.
FSHOOM


BY AURAN'S WINGS --!
"I HAD NOT A SECOND TO HESITATE, TO CONSIDER THE RAMIFICATIONS OF MY INVOLVEMENT. I SIMPLY KNEW THAT THOSE ON THE CRAFT ABOVE WERE IN *PERIL*.
"BUT THE PROXIMITY OF BOTH VESSELS WAS TOO IMMEDIATE. IT WAS CLEAR THAT I COULD NOT PREVENT THE *INEVITABLE* --"
BA-KOOM
BA-KOOM


GRAMPY! WHAT HAPPENED?
I DON'T KNOW.
...O, LORD ABOVE!
BA-KOOM
BILLY, YOU LISTEN CAREFULLY, LAD -- I WANT YOU TO STICK CLOSE TO ME. WHATEVER HAPPENS. UNDERSTAND?
DID WE HIT AN ICEBERG?
...THE DEUCED HUN, I'LL WARRANT. THEY WARNED US NOT TO SAIL ON A BRITISH SHIP INTO THESE WATERS...
BUT DARLING... SURELY THERE ARE WOMEN AND CHILDREN ABOARD!
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, PLEASE... REMAIN CALM! THE SHIP IS TAKING ON WATER, BUT WE ARE IN NO DANGER OF SINKING!


GET OUT OF THE WAY --!
PLEASE... I HAVE A YOUNG CHILD HERE! WE NEED TO GET DOWN BELOW --
ARE WE GOING TO SINK UNDER, GRAMPY? LIKE THE PEOPLE ON THE TITANIC?
DON'T YOU FRET, BILLY LAD. WE'RE ABOARD THE FINEST AND FASTEST OF THE CUNARD FLEET.
THERE'S NEVER BEEN A SULLIVAN LOST AT SEA YET. AND THERE WON'T BE ONE TODAY IF YOUR OLD GRAMPS CAN HELP IT. SO YOU JUST HOLD ON TIGHTLY TO ME --
WE'LL GET NOWHERE IN THE WATER WITHOUT OUR LIFEJACKETS, LAD. WE'LL HAVE TO GET TO THE BOATS.


"I WAS INCREDULOUS -- PARALYZED BY MY HORROR AS THE ENORMITY OF THE SITUATION BECAME CLEAR.
"THE LEVIATHAN WAS RAPIDLY FLOUNDERING, AND THE POWERLESS HUMANS UPON IT WOULD SURELY BE DRAGGED TO THEIR DEATHS AS IT CAME UNDER.

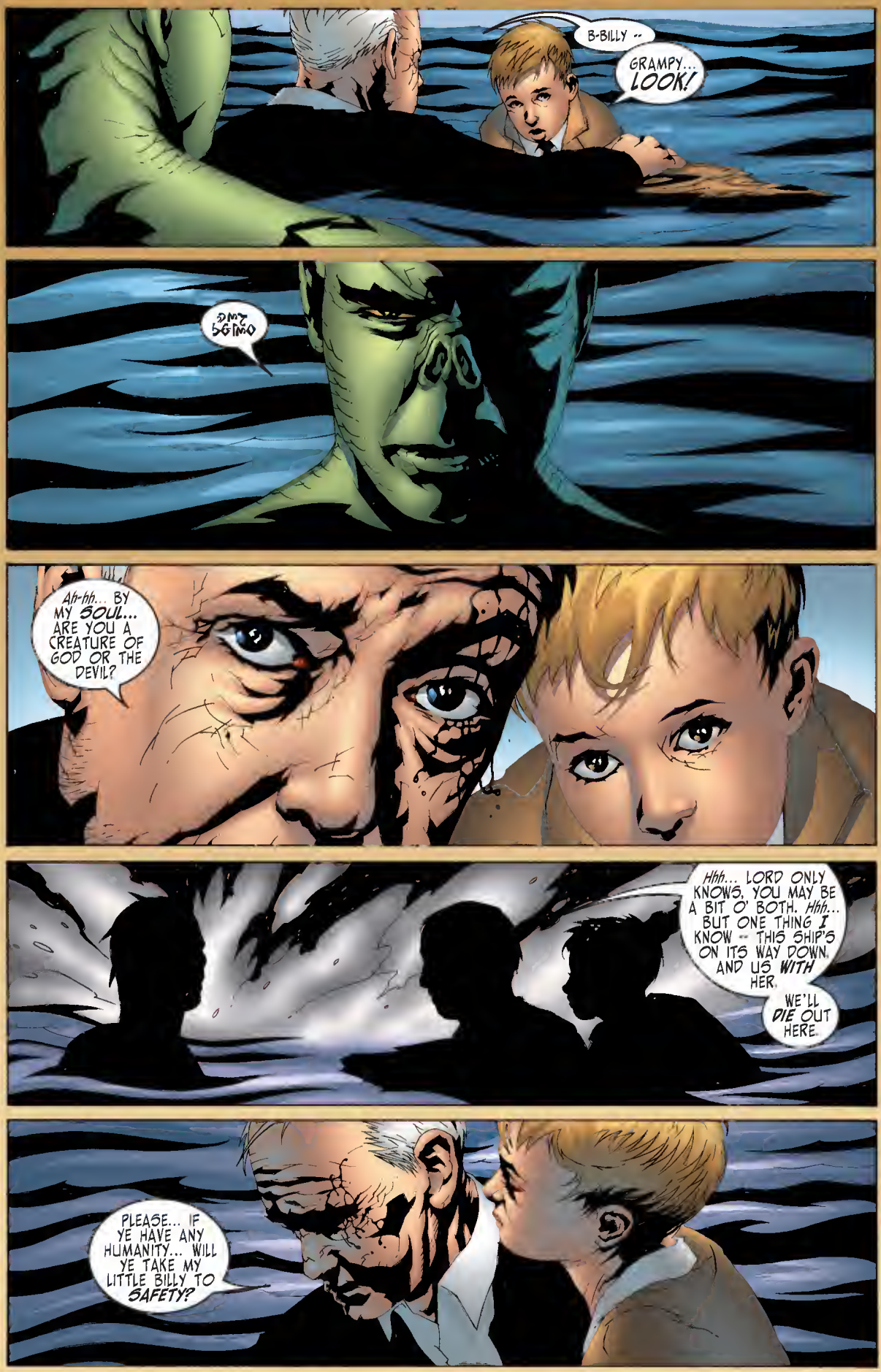

"IN TRUTH, THERE WAS ONLY ONE COURSE OF ACTION LEFT TO ME..."


IT'S NO *USE!* THE LIFEBOATS'LL NEVER CLEAR BEFORE SHE GOES DOWN!
AAH!

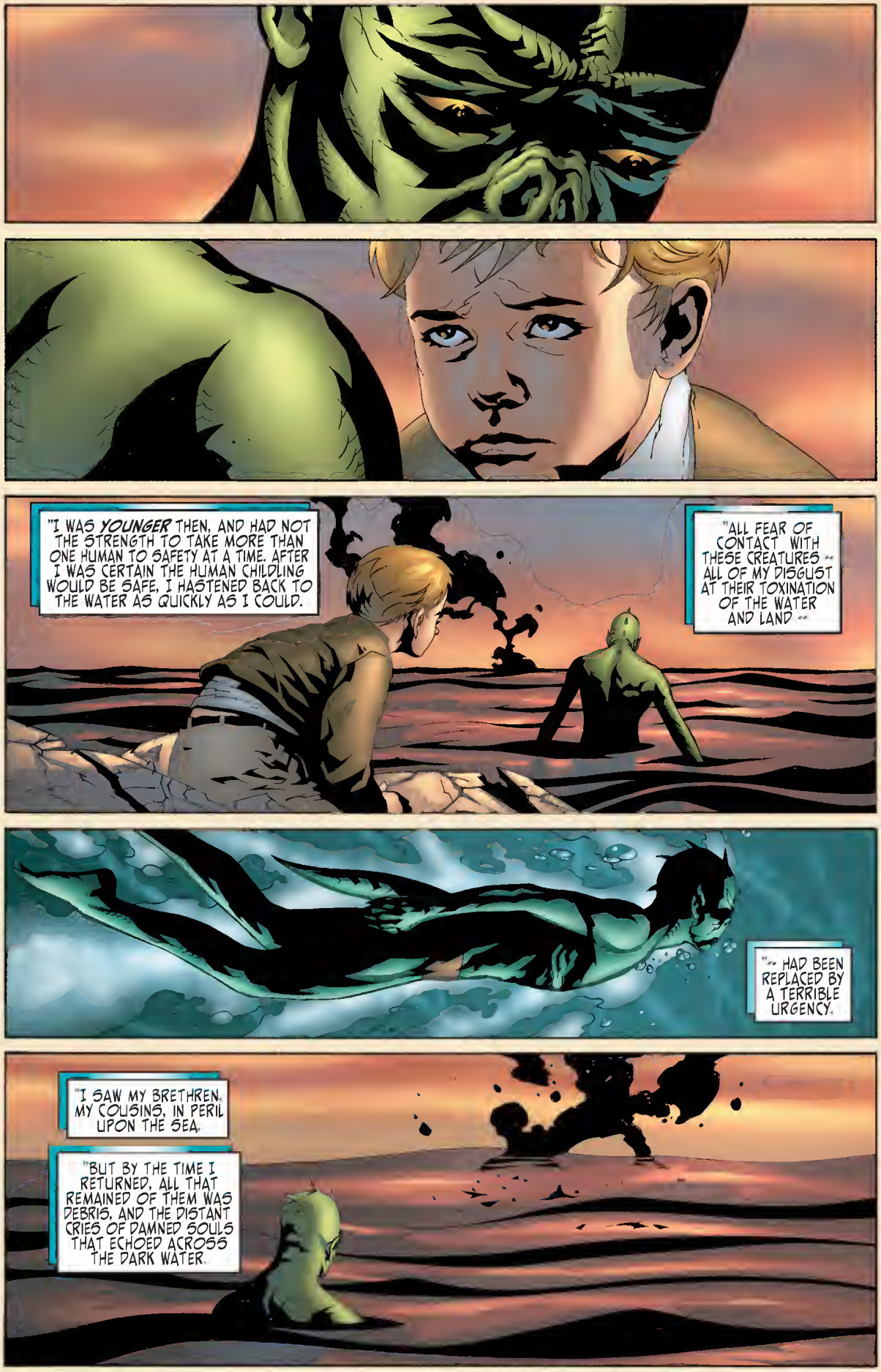

COME ON, LAD... IT'S NOW OR NEVER AT ALL. WE'RE *LEAVING* THIS TUB.

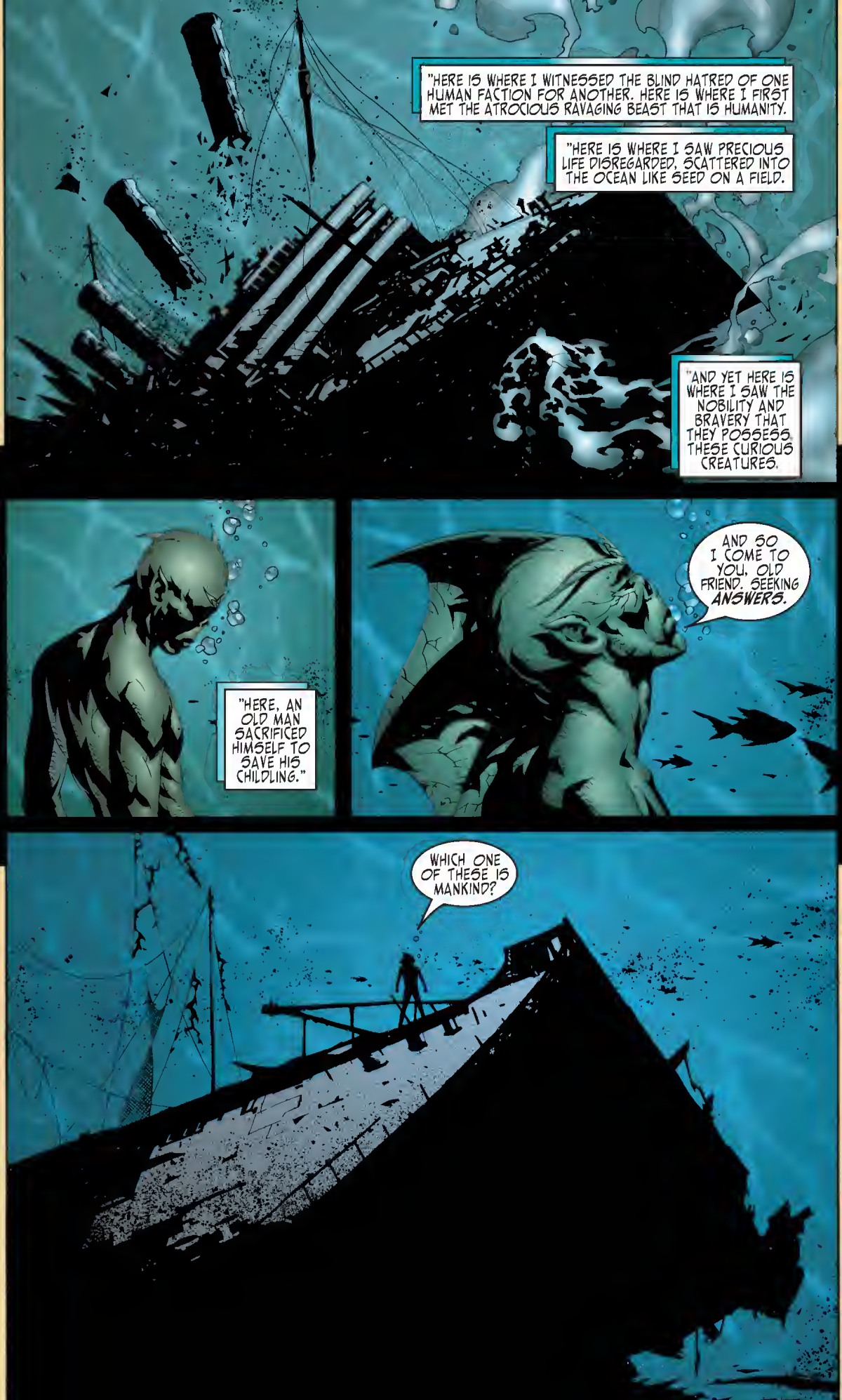

NOW YOU GRAB ONTO ME FOR YOUR DEAR *LIFE*, BILLY. AND HOLD YOUR BREATH TILL WE MAKE IT BACK UP TO THE *SURFACE* --!


BILLY! YOU HANG ON, LAD. YOU HEAR ME!
KAFF Ahh-Heech...!
Hhh- Hunn --
NNAhh! GRAMPY!
Ah-HKK! *KAFF*


B-BILLY --
GRAMPY... LOOK!
DMZ 5GIMO
Ah-hh... BY MY SOUL... ARE YOU A CREATURE OF GOD OR THE DEVIL?
Hhh... LORD ONLY KNOWS, YOU MAY BE A BIT O' BOTH. Hhh... BUT ONE THING I KNOW -- THIS SHIP'S ON ITS WAY DOWN, AND US WITH HER.
WE'LL DIE OUT HERE.
PLEASE... IF YE HAVE ANY HUMANITY... WILL YE TAKE MY LITTLE BILLY TO SAFETY?


I DON'T WANNA GO --
DON'T YOU WORRY, BRAVE LAD. YOU GO WITH HIM, AND YOUR GRAMPS'LL BE ALONG JUST AS SOON AS YE LIKE.
NNNAAHHAHH!!


"I WAS *YOUNGER* THEN, AND HAD NOT THE STRENGTH TO TAKE MORE THAN ONE HUMAN TO SAFETY AT A TIME. AFTER I WAS CERTAIN THE HUMAN CHILDLING WOULD BE SAFE, I HASTENED BACK TO THE WATER AS QUICKLY AS I COULD.
"ALL FEAR OF CONTACT WITH THESE CREATURES -- ALL OF MY DISGUST AT THEIR TOXINATION OF THE WATER AND LAND --
"-- HAD BEEN REPLACED BY A TERRIBLE URGENCY.
"I SAW MY BRETHREN, MY COUSINS, IN PERIL UPON THE SEA.
"BUT BY THE TIME I RETURNED, ALL THAT REMAINED OF THEM WAS DEBRIS, AND THE DISTANT CRIES OF DAMNED SOULS THAT ECHOED ACROSS THE DARK WATER.


"HERE IS WHERE I WITNESSED THE BLIND HATRED OF ONE HUMAN FACTION FOR ANOTHER. HERE IS WHERE I FIRST MET THE ATROCIOUS RAVAGING BEAST THAT IS HUMANITY.
"HERE IS WHERE I SAW PRECIOUS LIFE DISREGARDED, SCATTERED INTO THE OCEAN LIKE SEED ON A FIELD.
"AND YET HERE IS WHERE I SAW THE NOBILITY AND BRAVERY THAT THEY POSSESS. THESE CURIOUS CREATURES.
"HERE, AN OLD MAN SACRIFICED HIMSELF TO SAVE HIS CHILDLING."
AND SO I COME TO YOU, OLD FRIEND. SEEKING ANSWERS.
WHICH ONE OF THESE IS MANKIND?


COME ON, YOUNG MAN... IT'S TIME TO GET YOU INSIDE...
mmmh... mmuhh...


Oh, BILLY, YE DAFT OLD LAD... WHAT'S THE MATTER?
DID YE SEE ANOTHER MERMAID?


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STAN LEE PRESENTS.

SPIT OUT OF LUCK

GARTH ENNIS STORY STEVE DILLON PENCILS JIMMY PALMIOTTI INKS
CHRIS SOTOMAYOR COLORS RICHARD STARKINGS & COMICRAFT'S WES ABBOTT LETTERS
JOE QUESADA EDITOR NANCI DAKESIAN MANAGING EDITOR BOB HARRAS CHIEF

THE PUNISHER Vol. 3, No. 6, September, 2000. Published by MARVEL COMICS. Bill Jemas, President; Bob Harras, Editor-in-Chief; Stan Lee, Chairman Emeritus. OFFICE OF PUBLICATION: 387 PARK AVENUE SOUTH, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10016. Published monthly. Copyright © 2000 Marvel Characters, Inc. All rights reserved. Price $2.99 per copy in the U.S. and $4.50 in Canada. BRT #R127000000. No similarity between any of the names, characters, persons, and/or institutions in this magazine with those of any living or dead person or institution is intended, and any such similarity which may exist is purely coincidental. This periodical may not be sold except by authorized dealers and is sold subject to the condition that it shall not be sold or distributed with any part of its cover or markings removed. As a publication featuring all prominent characters featured in this issue and the distinctive likenesses


TEN DAYS AGO... HEY, THAT WOULDA BEEN THE NIGHT OF THE 200 THING. REMEMBER?
WELL I'M HARDLY LIKELY TO FORGET, AM I, NUMBSKULL?
OH YEAH.
SO HE CROSSES THE STREET, FALLS FLAT ON HIS FACE A COUPLE TIMES, AN' HE GOES INTO THE BUILDIN' OPPOSITE MINE—
I CAN'T BELIEVE IT, YOU KNOW? I MEAN THE PUNISHER LIVES RIGHT ACROSS THE STREET FROM ME! IT'S LIKE GOIN' INTO A RESTROOM AN' REALIZIN' YOU'RE STANDING NEXT TO IRON MAN!
SO I WATCH THE PLACE FOR ABOUT A WEEK, AN' SURE ENOUGH I SEE HIM COMIN' AN' GOIN'. I'M WONDERIN' WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT WHEN BENNY HERE COMES INTO MY STORE AN' MENTIONS THE TEN MILLION YOU GOT ON THE GUY'S HEAD—!
I-I ONLY WENT IN TO USE THE PHONE --!
SO WHEN DO I GET THE MONEY, MA?
THE TEN MILLION IS FOR WHOEVER KILLS HIM. YOUR INFORMATION IS WORTH TEN THOUSAND, IF IT'S ACCURATE.
BILLY AND BENNY, CHECK IT OUT. TAKE THIS REPTILE WITH YOU. IF HE'S WRONG—
MAKE IT A MESSY ONE.

NOW SEEMS THAT THE PUNISHER'S RETURN HAS INSPIRED A NUMBER OF OTHER VIGILANTES. POLICE HAVE SO FAR DISCOVERED THE BADLY-DISMEMBERED BODIES OF FOUR MEN IN THE AREA OF SPANISH HARLEM, EACH ONE'S FOREHEAD APPARENTLY MARKED WITH THE SIGN OF THE CROSS.

A POLICE SPOKESPERSON SAID THAT THE MEN WERE ALL SUSPECTED CRIMINALS; BIZARRELY, EACH WAS ALSO CATHOLIC AND ATTENDED CHURCH REGULARLY.





FIVE MEN DIED IN THE AREA OF RIVERSIDE PARK LAST NIGHT, WHEN A MYSTERY KILLER OPENED FIRE WITH A SILENCED PISTOL. THIS ARTIST'S IMPRESSION WAS TAKEN FROM A STATEMENT BY MAUREEN BENNETT, WHO DISCOVERED THE BODIES WHEN THE KILLER SHOT HER PET DOG.

SHE DESCRIBED HIM AS SMOOTH AND WELL-SPOKEN, APPARENTLY USING THE NAME ELITE. AN N.Y.P.D. SOURCE CONFIRMED THAT ALL FIVE MEN HAD CONVICTIONS FOR DRUG AND GANG-RELATED CRIME.

CORPORATE CRIME IS NOT IMMUNE TO THIS RASH OF VIGILANTE JUSTICE. YESTERDAY'S MASSACRE AT WORLDWIDE INVESTMENT CORPORATION'S WALL STREET OFFICES HAS BEEN ATTRIBUTED TO THIS MAN, HERE SEEN ON SECURITY VIDEO.

FIVE PEOPLE DIED AND SEVEN WERE BADLY INJURED WHEN THE MAN RAN AMOK WITH A MACHINE GUN AT A W.I.C. BOARD MEETING. "HE SAID OUR POLICIES WERE UNETHICAL. SAID WE HAD BLOOD ON OUR HANDS." A SHAKEN SURVIVOR TOLD REPORTERS. "HE CALLED HIMSELF MR. PAYBACK."



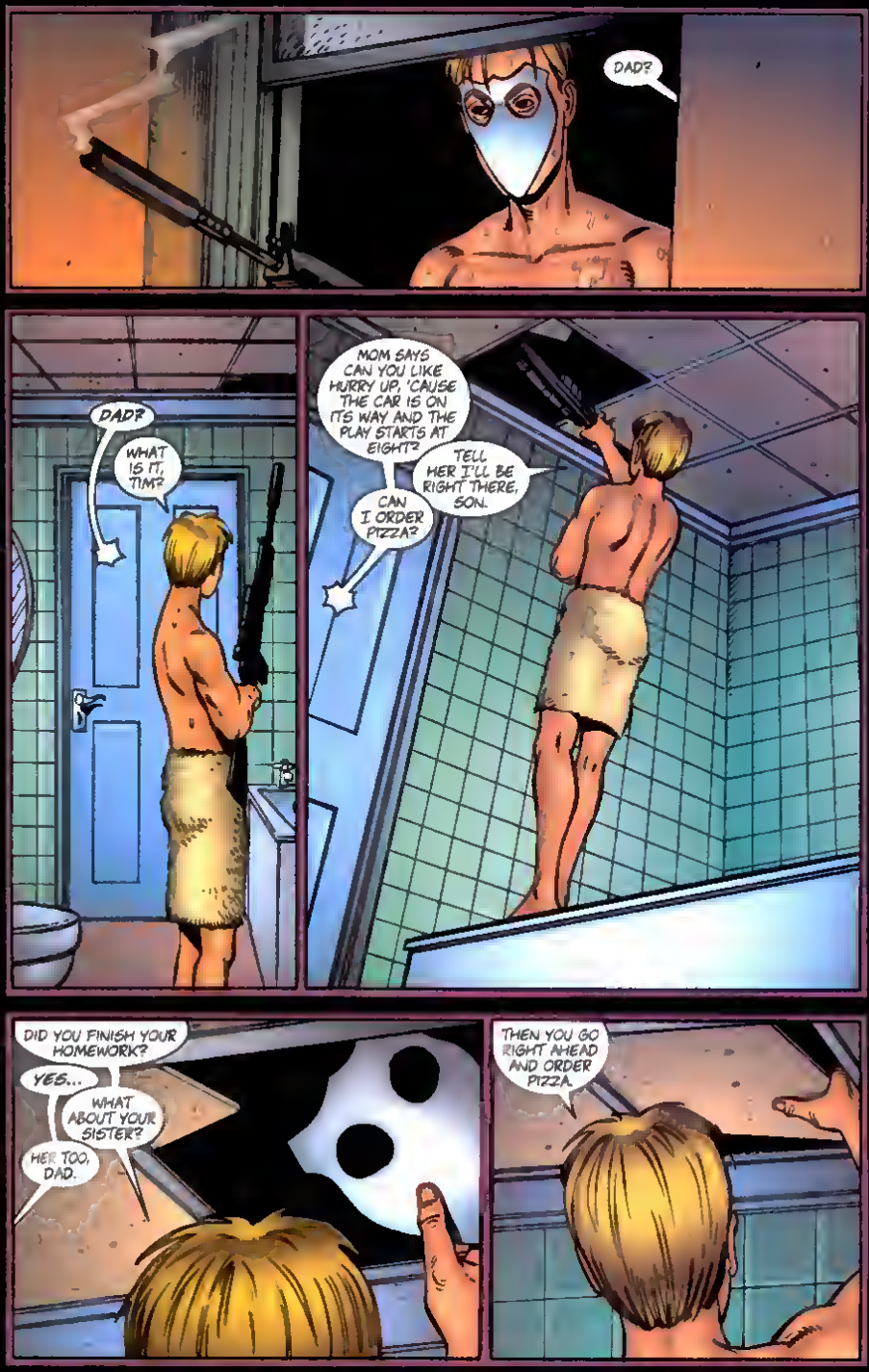

DETECTIVE MARTIN SOAP OF THE POLICE TASKFORCE ASSIGNED TO CATCHING THE PUNISHER HAD THIS TO SAY —
WELL YES — EXCUSE ME, SORRY — I MEAN THERE'S BOUND TO BE COPYCATS. THE IDEA OF -- CAN I JUST GET THROUGH -- STREET JUSTICE HAS ALWAYS BEEN SUPERFICIALLY ATTRACTIVE AND -- AW, DON'T TELL ME MY CAR'S BEEN TOWED AGAIN...!
OPINIONS ON THE VIGILANTES ARE NATURALLY DIVIDED —
THE PUNISHER IS WAY COOL, MAN! I MEAN, HE'S GOT HIS BIG SKULL THING GOIN' ON, AN' LIKE A UZI OR SOMETHIN'...
JUST MESSIN' UP BAD DUDES ALL DAY. THAT'S GOTTA ROCK!
I WOULD NEVER TAKE THE LAW INTO MY OWN HANDS, BUT IF THE ONLY PEOPLE WHO GET HURT ARE CRIMINALS, WELL...
HEY MR. MAYOR! HEY, YOU WATCHIN' THIS? THIS IS ZERO TOLERANCE, MAN, RIGHT HERE!
HI, MOM!
ARE YOU PEOPLE CRAZY?
THEY'RE KILLERS! THEY'RE A BUNCH OF FASCIST LUNATICS! THE PUNISHER'S THE WORST OF THE LOT!

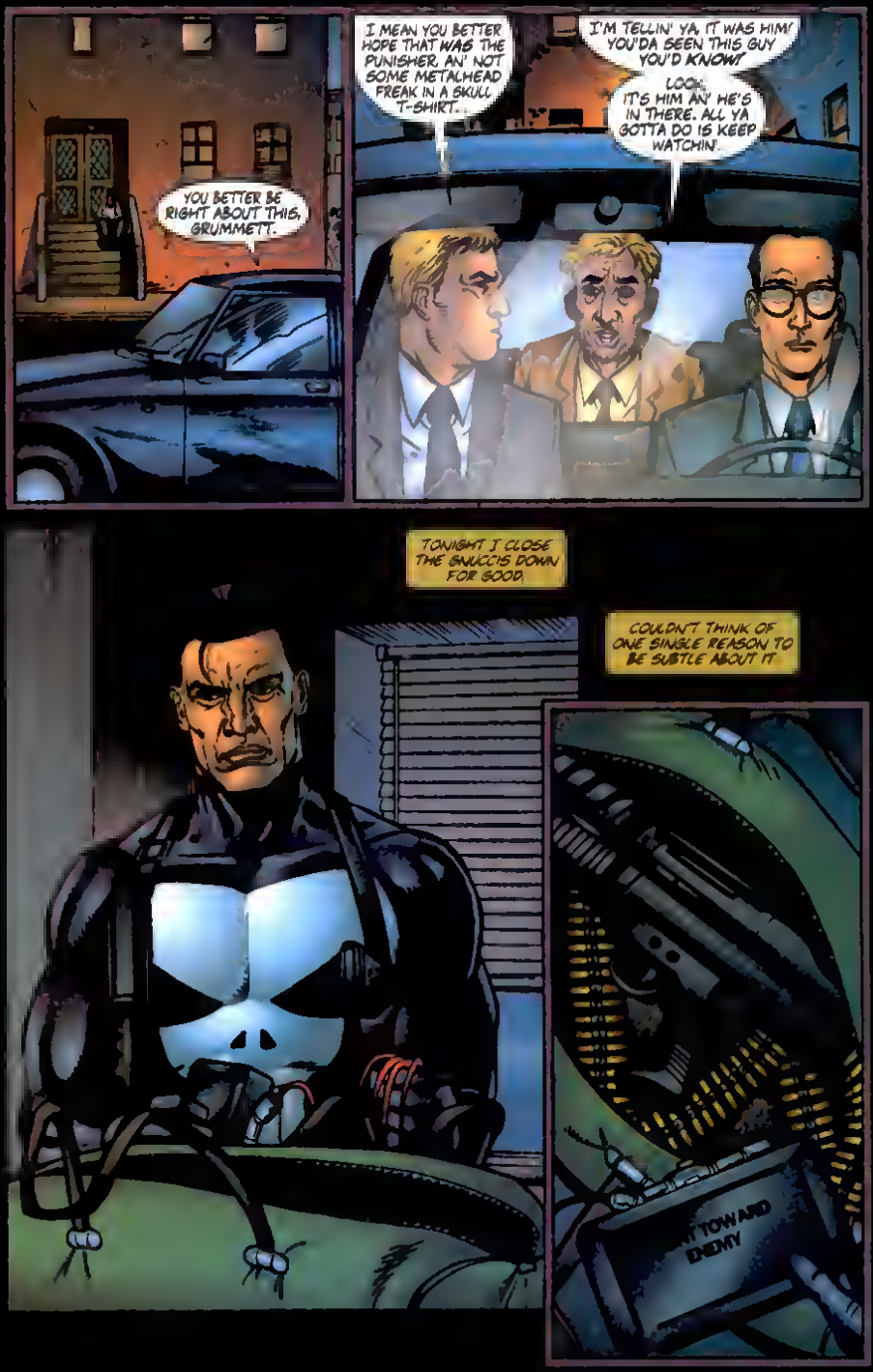

NOTHING BUT DAMNABLE, SLANDEROUS LIES!
MM?
WHAT THAT MANIAC WAS SHOUTING ABOUT YESTERDAY! I MEAN DID YOU HEAR THAT TAPE?
FIRING WORKFORCES, COLLUDING WITH DEATH SQUADS -- AND REALLY AS IF IT'S OUR FAULT SOME STUPID PLANE CRASHED! THE MAN'S OUT OF HIS MIND!
I THOUGHT HE WAS QUITE ASTUTE, ACTUALLY.
WHAT?
I'M C.E.O. I OUGHT TO KNOW WHAT WE GET UP TO
EVERYTHING THIS PAYBACK CHARACTER SAID ABOUT POLICY WAS ACCURATE. WE DID ALL THOSE THINGS, AND MUCH, MUCH WORSE, HENCE OUR CURRENT PROFITS.
THE TRICK WILL BE TO STOP HIM BEFORE PEOPLE LOOK BEYOND THE CRAZED KILLER AND START LISTENING TO WHAT HE'S SAYING
WHAT ON EARTH...?


IS THAT -- IT IS! IT'S PAYBACK!
WHAT'S THAT HE'S GOT?
NO!
NO, LORD, NO, I DON'T WANT TO DIE! MOMMEEEE!
PILOT, TAKE EVASIVE ACTION! GET US OUT OF RANGE! DO SOMETHING, FOR CRYING OUT LOUD!
OH, WHAT AM I PAYING YOU F--


WOULDA BEEN SOMEWHERE ROUND HERE IT HAPPENED...
MAN, THIS IS SOME NEIGHBORHOOD YOU KNOW? ONE NIGHTA G.T.A. HERE AN' WE COULD RETIRE FOR LIFE...
GONNA DO A LOT MORE'N THAT, HOLMES. GONNA SHOW THIS ELITE FOOL WHAT TIME IT IS
PROMISED STEVIE'S SISTER THIS PUNK WAS MEAT. MAN, I'M'A GIVE HIM THIS WHOLE MUTHALOVIN' CLIP --

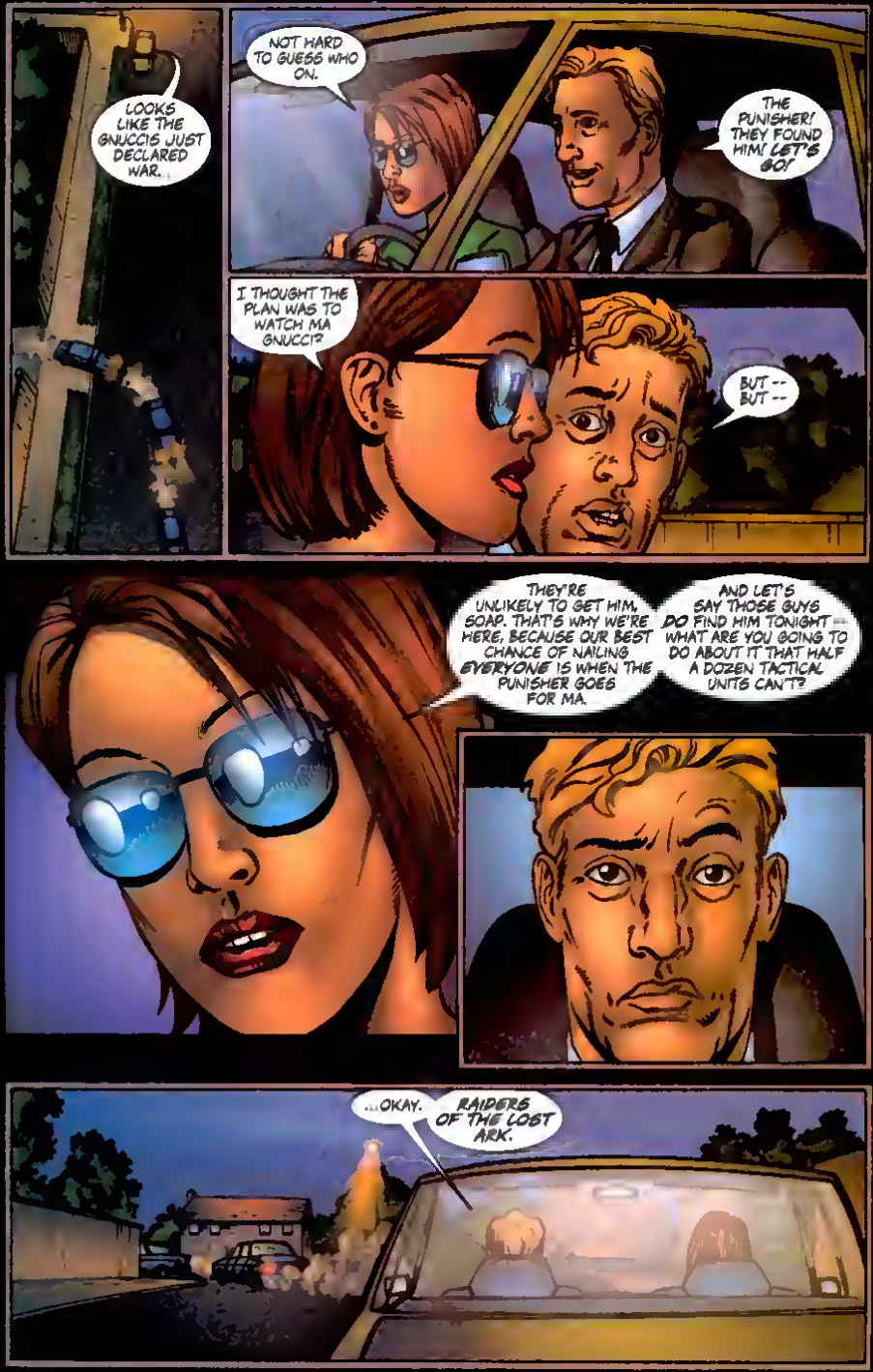

HOLEE--
DRIVE, FOOL!
WAAAAGHH!
AW NO -- NO --
DONK


DAD?
DAD?
WHAT IS IT, TIM?
MOM SAYS CAN YOU LIKE HURRY UP, 'CAUSE THE CAR IS ON ITS WAY AND THE PLAY STARTS AT EIGHT?
TELL HER I'LL BE RIGHT THERE, SON.
CAN I ORDER PIZZA?
DID YOU FINISH YOUR HOMEWORK?
YES...
WHAT ABOUT YOUR SISTER?
HER TOO, DAD.
THEN YOU GO RIGHT AHEAD AND ORDER PIZZA.


YOU BETTER BE RIGHT ABOUT THIS, GRUMMETT.
I MEAN YOU BETTER HOPE THAT WAS THE PUNISHER, AN' NOT SOME METALHEAD FREAK IN A SKULL T-SHIRT.
I'M TELLIN' YA, IT WAS HIM! YOU'D KNOW!
LOOK, IT'S HIM AN' HE'S IN THERE. ALL YA GOTTA DO IS KEEP WATCHIN'.
TONIGHT I CLOSE THE SNUCCIS DOWN FOR GOOD.
COULDN'T THINK OF ONE SINGLE REASON TO BE SUBTLE ABOUT IT.


CAR'S PARKED A BLOCK OVER
TIME I MOVED ON ANYWAY. PLACE IS STARTING TO FEEL TOO FAMILIAR. TOO VULNERABLE.
I'M GETTING KNOWN HERE.
SPACKER DAVE.
SP--
HEY!
MR. SMITH, DUDE! YOU GOT IT?
THIS LAST JOB AND I'M DONE.
I DON'T BELIEVE IT...!
TOLD YA!
MRS. GNUCCI! IT'S HIM!
WHAT?!
FOLLOW HIM! GET THE OTHERS! BRING THEM DOWN ON HIM LIKE A PACK OF DOGS!
YES, MA'AM!
DISAPPEAR, SICKBAG.

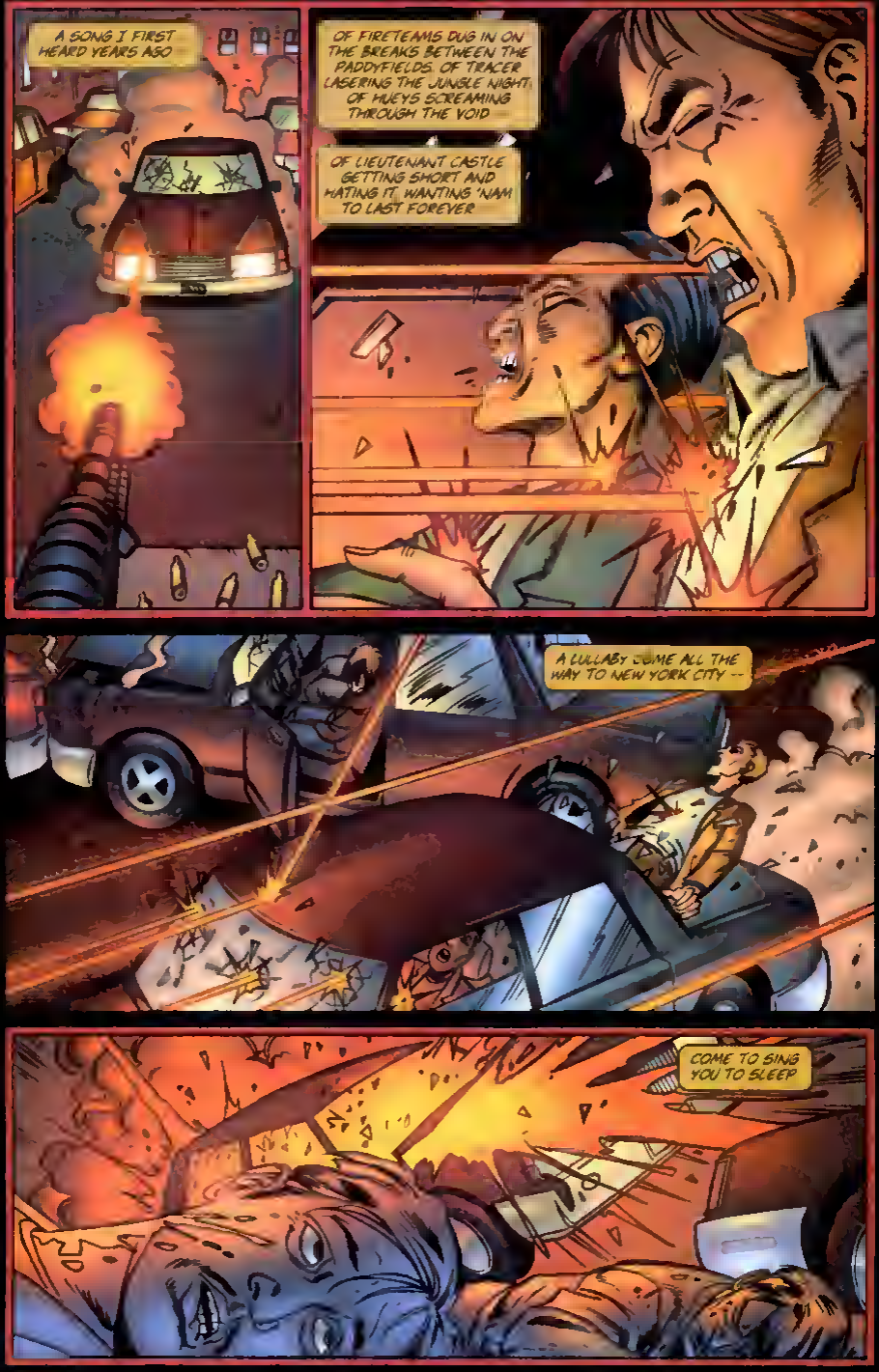

JAWS.
MM?
IT'S A GAME. I GIVE YOU THE TITLE OF A MOVIE, YOU HAVE TO COME UP WITH ANOTHER ONE BEGINNING WITH THE LAST LETTER OF MINE. AND SO ON.
JAWS.
OH, I DON'T KNOW, SOAP...
COME ON, YOU CAN WATCH AND PLAY AT THE SAME TIME. THAT'S THE BEAUTY OF IT.
I MEAN WE'VE GOT TO DO SOMETHING TO STAY AWAKE
PIZZA
POINT. OKAY. EEE... THE SPANISH PRISONER.
GOOD MOVIE. ARE...
HEY, WHAT'S THIS?


LOOKS LIKE THE GNUCCIS JUST DECLARED WAR.
NOT HARD TO GUESS WHO ON.
THE PUNISHER! THEY FOUND HIM! LET'S GO!
I THOUGHT THE PLAN WAS TO WATCH MA GNUCCI?
BUT -- BUT --
THEY'RE UNLIKELY TO GET HIM, SOAP. THAT'S WHY WE'RE HERE, BECAUSE OUR BEST CHANCE OF NAILING EVERYONE IS WHEN THE PUNISHER GOES FOR MA.
AND LET'S SAY THOSE GUYS DO FIND HIM TONIGHT -- WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO ABOUT IT THAT HALF A DOZEN TACTICAL UNITS CAN'T?
...OKAY.
RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK.

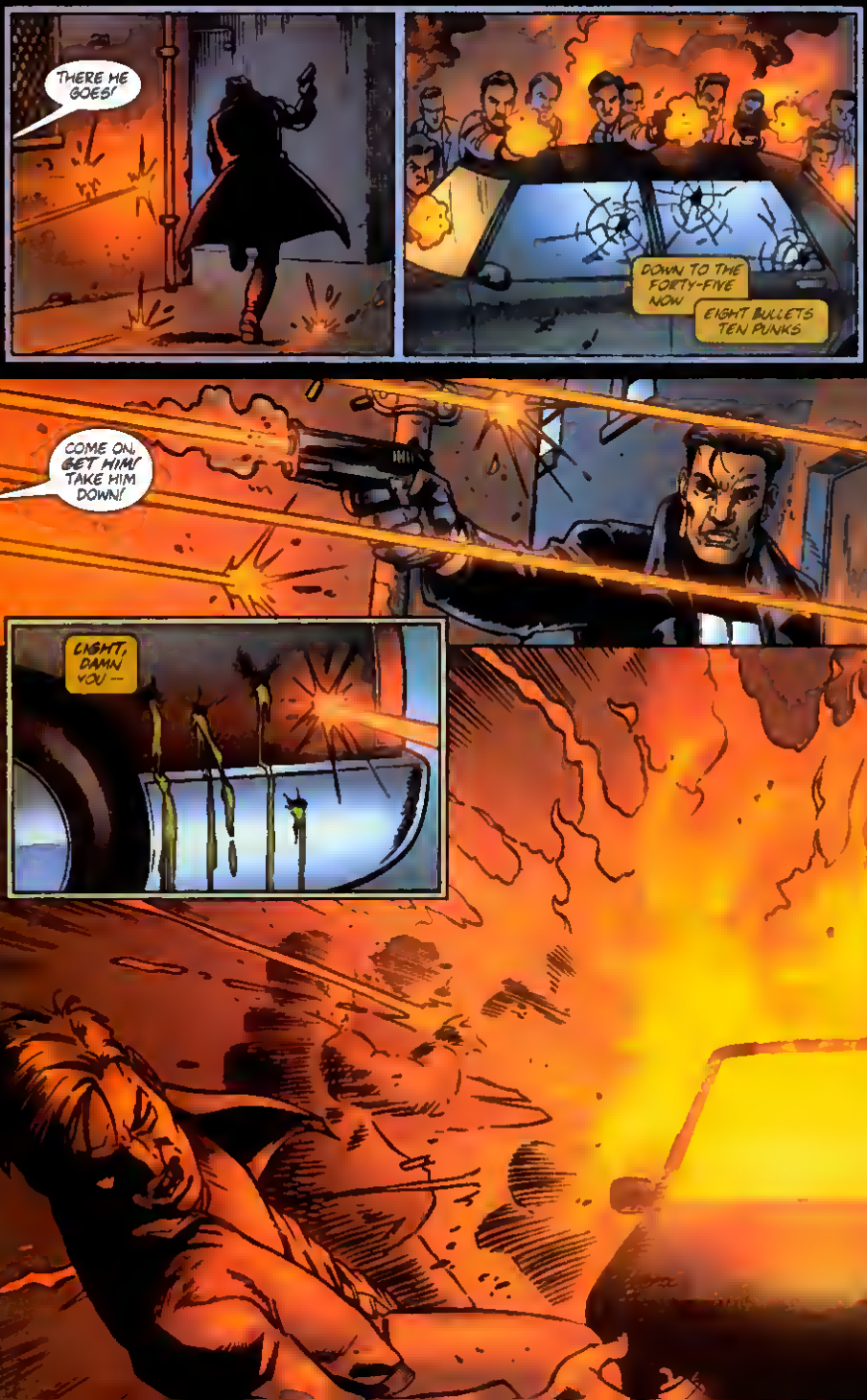

THEY COME OUT OF NOWHERE
ONE SECOND THE NIGHT IS QUIET, AND THE NEXT --
I KNOW I'M ZEROED
THERE ARE DOZENS OF THEM
AND IT'S GOING TO BE A BAD ONE
NOT HOW YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO USE THESE
BUT I NEED TO CLEAR SOME SPACE.
WHOA!


HUH?
FRONT TOWARD ENEMY
TWO POUNDS OF PLASTIQUE
PLUS SEVEN HUNDRED BALL BEARINGS
PLUS FIVE GAUCCI SOLDIERS
KLIK
EQUALS
HOLY JEEZ --!
WHAT HAPPENED...?
WAIT, WHAT'S HE --
NO!


LINKS DISINTEGRATE --
BOLT CLANKS BACK AND FORTH BEHIND THE THUDDING ROAR
BRASS RAINS ON THE SIDEWALK --
THE SIXTY RATTLES OUT ITS SONG


A SONG I FIRST HEARD YEARS AGO
OF FIRETEAMS DUG IN ON THE BREAKS BETWEEN THE PADDYFIELDS. OF TRACER LASERING THE JUNGLE NIGHT. OF HUEYS SCREAMING THROUGH THE VOID
OF LIEUTENANT CASTLE GETTING SHORT AND HATING IT, WANTING 'NAM TO LAST FOREVER
A LULLABY COME ALL THE WAY TO NEW YORK CITY --
COME TO SING YOU TO SLEEP


YEEAARRGGH!
NNOOO --
MIKEY, JOHNNY, DEAR LORD
SOMEBODY DO SOMETHIN'! SOMEBODY BRING HIM DOWN!
YOU GOT IIISSHH


THERE ME GOES!
DOWN TO THE FORTY-FIVE NOW
EIGHT BULLETS TEN PUNKS
COME ON, GET HIM! TAKE HIM DOWN!
LIGHT, DAMN YOU —


HMMM
KEVLAR TOOK IT DIDN'T NOTICE.
YOU MOTHERLOVIN' VERMIN, YOU ARE DEAD!
VINNIE, MOVE, I GOT A SHOT--


DAMMIT, VINNIE!
KEVLAR COULDN'T STOP THAT ONE
I SAID I HAD HIM --
BADAMM
BADAMM
OR THAT.
ALL RIGHT, THEN.
ALL RIGHT.
WHAT THE --?!
LITTLE MAN WITH A BIG GUN
BADAMM BADAMM BADAMM
THAT'S ALL YOU ARE.
BADAMM


KRAK
UNNHH
GOD TURNS THE SOUND OFF.
THEN THE LIGHTS.
ANY SECOND..
NOW.
TO BE CONTINUED?


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CRACH
CRACH
CRACH
CRACH


RAVIOLI
SLAAMM
UGGHHNN
...C'MON...
AACKK!
BWAM
--?!
...CAN OPENER...?!
VIOLI
YEEARRGGHH!
BANG BANG BANG BANG BANG BANG
The story thus far...

STAN LEE PRESENTS: THE BLACK PANTHER

ENEMY OF THE STATE

After stopping a near-riot outside the Waldorf Astoria, the client dashed off to deal with some unfinished business

Y'see, although he'd been deposed as ruler by a grinning nutbag named ACHEBE, the client still held the command codes to Wakanda's satellite network and he'd had those birds aimed at the riot scene all evening.

During the excitement, Achebe mentioned something about his "agents" in the U.S. Though the client seriously doubted Achebe actually had any people on U.S soil, he assumed Achebe was the puppet of much more powerful and dangerous factions who could have a global reach.

CAPTAIN KONE

ICECREAM

So, while the client and the Avengers dealt with the riot, the satellites snapped thousands of detailed photos looking for needles in haystacks. Looking for the people who put an exoskeleton on Monica Lynne. Looking for anything out of place near Ms. Lynne's house, near the client's HQ at a Brooklyn housing mansion. Listening for a heartbeat --

-- for the PULSE of the faceless BEAST that had stolen his kingdom.

CHRISTOPHER PRIEST STORY MIKE MANLEY ART

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RICHARD STARKINGS AND COMICRAFT LETTERS

NANCI DAKESIAN MANAGING EDITOR

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LONG LIVE THE KING








The Dora Milaje fired GEL-FILLED slugs, similar to what the Punisher once called "mercy bullets."
So nobody ACTUALLY got their BRAINS blown out --
-- though I'm SURE the client was TEMPTED.
The Reverend Dr. Michael Ibn al-hajj Achebe, KING of FRUIT LOOPS, had taken over the client's country.
THESE monkeys HELPED him DO it.
That constituted an ACT of WAR.
SSKRRITTCCHH
Leaving those bozos lying in the street, gaggin' on their own blood, would have been WELL within the client's RIGHTS.
But, at the moment, more than VENGEANCE --


--the client wanted Answers.
<THANK ME.>*
--?? WHAT --?
<THANK ME FOR SAVING YOUR WORTHLESS LIFE.>
<THIS VAN WAS USED TO RELAY ACHEBE'S TRANSMISSIONS. YOU CAPTURED MONICA LYNNE IN THIS VAN -- PLACED ACHEBE'S DEVICES ON HER>**
<AND THEN THEY TOLD YOU TO DRIVE AROUND THE CITY UNTIL IT WAS SAFE TO RETURN THE VAN TO ITS OWNERS. ONLY ONE PROBLEM, SERGEV -->
*From Russian **Last issue --J&J
<-- I FOUND YOU. AND THE PEOPLE WHO OWN THIS TRUCK KNOW IT.>
<THEY'RE GOING TO BLOW UP THIS TRUCK.>
<THAT IS, IF NOT FOR KIMOYO.>
<MY KIMOYO CARD IS JAMMING THE INCOMING DESTRUCT SIGNAL -- FOR NOW.>
<BUT I THINK IT ONLY FAIR TO TELL YOU, SERGEV -- YOU'VE MADE ME VERY ANGRY.>
<THIS IS NOT A GOOD THING.>
NO, I SHOULD SAY NOT --
--AFTER ALL, IT IS WRITTEN: IT IS A TERRIBLE THING TO FALL INTO THE HANDS OF AN ANGRY UKATANA!"*
ACHEBE
SAM I AM.
*Ukatana= Aulu for "Kitten." -- J&J
TELL ME, UKAT -- YOU ARE NOT STILL ANGRY WITH ME OVER Ms. LYNNE --? HONESTLY, NOW --
--WHAT'S A FEW BARS OF C4 BETWEEN FRIENDS --?
I WILL RETURN TO MY THRONE, USURPER --
-- AND DEAL WITH YOU -- AND YOUR ALLIES -- SEVERELY.
S
IS THAT SO, UKATANA? DAKI -- REMIND OUR FRIEND!


He's not our friend! He is the mighty Ukatana! The Dark Kitten!
Achebe, King of The World, should remind Silly Kitten of your pact!
There is peace in Wakanda only so long as Silly Kitten never returns!
The moment you arrive, you will find a mountain of dead Wakandans —
SHUT UP, YOU JERK!
SON — IS THAT YOU --?
THWAACK
RAMONDA --!
I CAN ONLY GUESS WHAT ACHEBE HAS BEEN UP TO —
ACHEBE IS NOT OUR TRUE CONCERN, MOTHER — I CANNOT SAY MORE
I DON'T WANT YOU TO, T'CHALLA.
THE DEAL WE MADE TO STOP THE FIGHTING -- THAT ACHEBE AND I WOULD SHARE POWER —
— WELL, IT'S NO DAY AT THE BEACH.
THE PEOPLE ARE BRISTLING AT HAVING TWO OUTSIDERS RULE THE NATION.
YOU ARE NO OUT-SIDER. YOU ARE FAMILY.
I AM YOUR FATHER'S WIFE, T'CHALLA, AND I CAN'T KEEP PLAYING THAT CARD FOREVER.
SON -- WHATEVER ACHEBE IS DOING... DON'T LET HIM GOAD YOU
BE PATIENT -- BE SMART. CALL WHEN YOU CAN.
<WAIT -- WHAT MUST I DO TO LIVE --?!>
<FOR NOW, SERGEY, FASTEN YOUR SEATBELT AND PRAY THEY LEFT THE AIR BAGS INTACT.>
<NAKIA -- GET DZHOKHAR GAPON ON THE PHONE.>
<OKOYE -- TRANSFER TO THE TALON FIGHTER.>


HOW -- DARE YOU STRIKE THE KING OF THE --
SLAAAPP
I SAID -- SHUT UP--!
LISTEN TO ME, YOU IDIOT --
-- I BROUGHT YOU ALONG FOR THE RIDE BECAUSE YOU'RE A GOOD FRONT MAN.
BUT YOUR SICK OBSESSION WITH T'CHALLA HAS COST US PRECIOUS TIME!
YOU FREAKING PSYCHOPATH --
-- THANKS TO YOU HE HAS GAPON'S PEOPLE
WHICH MEANS, IN ONLY HOURS HE'LL HAVE VINCENT --
-- MAYBE EVEN TAYLOR.
ONCE THAT HAPPENS EVERYTHING BECOMES BLOODY AND LOUD, AND I PROMISE YOU THIS, YOU WACKO LOON --
-- WHEN THE SHOOTING STARTS, YOU WILL BE THE FIRST TO DROP.
I'VE BEEN DEAD BEFORE, RAMONDA.
I GOT OVER IT.
MY... TOUCHY OLD BAT, ISN'T SHE--
PROBABLY ALL THAT GUILT FROM HAVING PLOTTED HER OWN STEPSON'S OUSTER.
AFTER ALL, T'CHALLA'S NO FOOL, IT WAS ONLY A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE HE PUT EVERY THING TOGETHER ANYWAY --
-- DON'T YOU AGREE, DAKI --?
Insane! The woman is insane, and Achebe is King of the Universe!
KING AND QUEEN!
It is time for the King to unleash his secret weapon --
-- time for everyone to die!

MYSTERY DATE



TRUCK MAN


Dzhokhar Gapon was once a high-ranking official of the Soviet Politburo. Now, however, Gapon runs a deli in Fort Hamilton, and most of the Russian Mafia on the East Coast.
<WHO IS THIS?!>
<A MAN WITH A TRUCK.>
<WHAT DO I CARE ABOUT TRUCKS?!>
<YOU CARE ABOUT THIS ONE, GAPON. YOU LOST IT. I HAVE IT. AND THEY CAN'T BLOW IT UP. WHICH MEANS -->
<-- YOU'D BETTER DUCK.>
BRRAATATATATAT
<ARE YOU CRAZY?!>
<I AM ANGRY. AND YOU ARE IN EXTREME PERIL.>
BRRATATATAT
<YOUR MASTERS HAVE A HUGE P.R. PROBLEM, GAPON, AND WE BOTH KNOW THE BEST WAY THEY CAN PROTECT THEMSELVES IS TO START SLAMMING DOORS.>
<IDIOT! YOU ARE FIGHTING A WHIRLWIND -->
<-- THESE THINGS MUST HAPPEN EVERY SO OFTEN -- JUST TO KEEP EVERYONE HONEST!>
<GAPON, WHEN YOU SAY, "THESE THINGS," YOU ARE TALKING ABOUT MY PEOPLE, MY LAND.>
<ABOUT AN ETHNIC WAR, FUNDED BY YOUR MONEY, SIMPLY TO DESTABILIZE THE REGION. ABOUT A CHILD THROWN OFF A ROOF JUST TO LURE ME FROM MY THRONE. "THESE THINGS," GAPON -->
<-- ARE THE EVIL THAT MEN DO, AND THE VENGEANCE THEY REAP.>
<THE PEOPLE YOU ARE PROTECTING ARE ON THEIR WAY TO KILL YOU. MAKE YOUR CHOICE.>
NE

THE VERY BEST




MS. LYNNE --
FORGET IT.
WHATEVER YOU'RE SELLING -- I'M NOT INTERESTED.
I'VE NOTHING TO SELL YOU, Ms. LYNNE --
-- THAT YOU HAVEN'T ALREADY PAID FOR.
MY NAME IS HUNTER. I'M CALLED THE WHITE WOLF.
I SEE. WELL THEN, HUNTER, MAYBE YOU CAN TELL ME --
-- EXACTLY WHICH BRIDGE I HAVE TO HURL MYSELF OFF IN ORDER TO GET EVERYBODY TO JUST LEAVE ME ALONE.
I HAVE NOTHING AT ALL TO DO WITH T'CHALLA ANYMORE -- WHY CAN'T ANY OF YOU PEOPLE UNDERSTAND THAT?!?
I UNDERSTAND, Ms. LYNNE, THOUGH OTHERS OBVIOUSLY DON'T. BUT, DON'T WORRY --
-- ANGELS SURROUND YOU.
ANGELS. Huh? GUESS THAT MAKES YOU ONE OF THE GOOD GUYS. Huh?
ONE OF THE VERY BEST, A LOYAL SON OF WAKANDA.
JUST A TAD PALE FOR THAT, DON'TCHA THINK?
IT'S A LONG STORY.
I'LL BET.
SO HUNTER -- I GET IN THIS PIMP RIDE -- I NEED TWO THINGS FROM YOU.
JUST ASK.
TAKE ME TO T'CHALLA.
AND TELL ME EXACTLY WHO DANNY VINCENT IS.

JACK BE QUICK

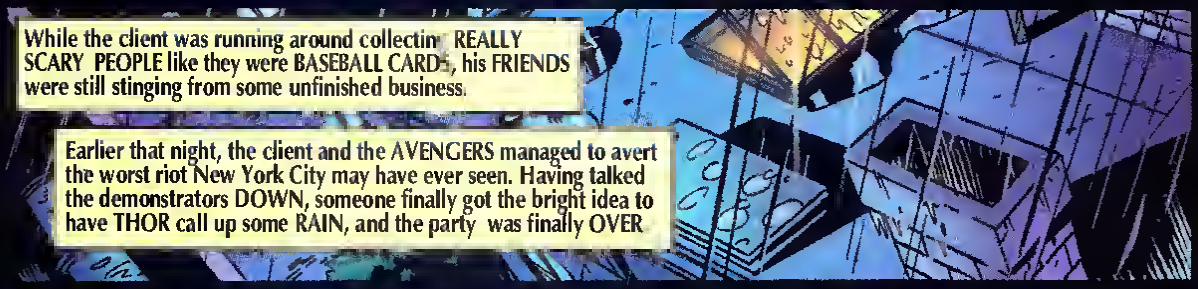


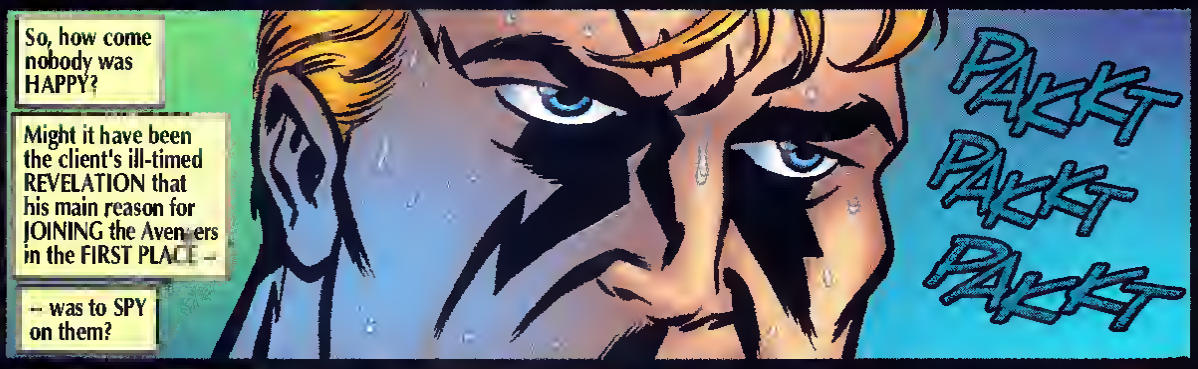

SPECTRUM DYNAMICS CORP. -- FIGHTER JETS, AIRCRAFT CARRIERS, SPY SATELLITES, ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE CHIPSETS. $158 BILLION GROSS REVENUES LAST YEAR.
SKREEEEE
A COMPANY THAT BUILDS $30 MILLION ICE CREAM TRUCKS AND HAS THE POWER TO GET THE RUSSIAN MOB TO DRIVE THEM AROUND.
A COMPANY THAT IS A CREATURE OF THE UNITED STATES INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY.
JACK, WE BOTH KNOW THIS... BEAT --
-- THE THING THAT HAS TOPPLED MY GOVERNMENT -- WAS CONJURED FROM DISPARATE WHISPERS AND DARK CORNERS OF CORPORATE GREED, POLITICAL PATRONAGE AND MILITARY BRINKMANSHIP.
IT HAS BEEN YEARS IN THE MAKING --
-- AND IT WAS GIVEN VOICE BY YOU.
BRAAATATATA
BRATATATAT
BRAATATATA
BRATATATA
BRAAATA

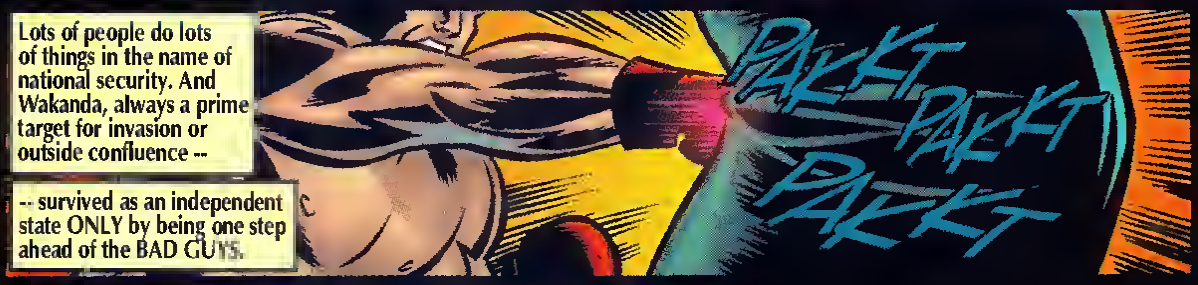

FOR YEARS THE WESTERN ALLIANCE HAS PURSUED A TECHNOLOGY EXCHANGE WITH WAKANDA.
...WHICH I HAVE DISALLOWED.
AND I HAVE ALLOWED SALES OF VIBRANIUM IN STRICTLY CONTROLLED QUANTITIES
AACKK!
NOT KNOWING WAKANDA'S CAPABILITIES -- SCIENTIFIC, STRATEGIC, OR TACTICAL -- HAS ALWAYS MADE THE WEST NERVOUS.
WE HAVE, UNTIL NOW, THWARTED EVERY ATTEMPT AT ESPIONAGE AND STYMIED EVERY DIPLOMATIC ATTEMPT AT FORCED COMPLIANCE WITH GLOBAL POLITICAL IMPERATIVES.
THUS, IT WAS ONLY A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE THE WESTERN NATIONS WOULD ACT OUT OF SELF-PRESERVATION OR IN THE NAME OF THEIR OWN NATIONAL SECURITY.
UNIDENTIFIED FOREIGN AGENTS SUPPLIED ARMS AND MATERIAL TO GHUDAZAI REBELS, DESTABILIZING THE REGION AND POSITIONING MICHAEL ACHEBE TO SEIZE POWER IN WAKANDA.
THE DAY ACHEBE WON, THE SENATE ARMS COMMITTEE REVERSED ITSELF AND APPROVED THE SALE OF G-8 COMPUTER PROCESSORS TO VOLCAN DOMUYO, A SUSPECTED TERRORIST STATE IN LATIN AMERICA.
THOUGH I HAD SUSPECTED MANY OF THESE THINGS, I MIGHT NOT HAVE SEEN THESE HANDS SO CLEARLY IF YOU HADN'T MADE A CRITICAL ERROR --
-- CHOOSING ACHEBE AS YOUR FIGUREHEAD IN WAKANDA. ACHEBE HAS AN IRRATIONAL HATRED OF ME AND CANNOT RESIST ATTACKING ME.
WHICH ENABLED ME TO FIND YOU WITH YOUR PANTS DOWN --
-- RUSSIAN GANGSTERS DRIVING A $30 MILLION SPECTRUM TRUCK, AND AN LCL AGENT CONFISCATING EVIDENCE AT 1 POLICE PLAZA.
VERY SLOPPY, JACK --

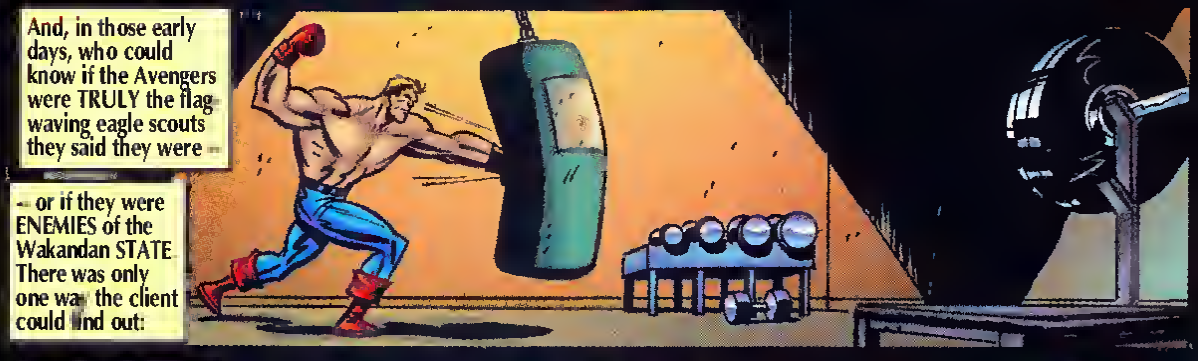

-- YOU SHOULD *THANK* ME FOR *SAVING* YOUR *LIFE*. WE BOTH KNOW THE SECRET AGENT *CODE* -- THE *COLLAPSING CIRCLE* --
-- NOW THAT YOUR *HUSTLE* HAS BEEN *COMPROMISED*, YOUR OWN *SECURITY MEN* WOULD HAVE *KILLED YOU* IN THAT ELEVATOR.
U.S. INTEL DOESN'T HAVE THE *BUDGET* TO START A *CIVIL WAR* IN GHUDAZA, AND CERTAINLY CANNOT ASK *CONGRESS* FOR IT. SO SOMEONE CALLS A MAN LIKE *YOU* TO BROKER A *DEAL*.
IN RETURN FOR THE TWELVE SUITCASES FULL OF *CASH*, THE D.E.A. LOOSENS THEIR STRANGLEHOLD ON THE RUSSIAN MOBSTER DZHOKHAR GAPON. YOU GIVE GAPON'S CASH TO *LCL* AGENT DANNY VINCENT, WHO FUNDS THE OPERATION IN GHUDAZA.*
VINCENT'S REWARD IS THE G-B COMPUTER CHIPS WHICH CONGRESS SUDDENLY DECIDES TO SELL TO VOLCAN DOMUYO. IT'S ALL NATIONAL SECURITY INTERESTS TO HIM
GAPON'S RUSSIANS ARE YOUR EYES AND EARS HERE IN THE STATES. VINCENT'S *LCL* MECHANICS ARE YOUR PEOPLE IN GHUDAZA. *NONE* OF THE MONEY AND *NONE* OF THE PERSONNEL ARE TRACEABLE TO THE U.S. INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY.
GAPON'S RUSSIANS HELP ACHEBE SET UP THE *TOMORROW FUND* SCANDAL, LURING ME *HERE* -- THE *COUP* IS SUCCESSFUL --
-- AND SPECTRUM DYNAMICS GAINS CONTROL OF THE MOST TECHNOLOGICALLY ADVANCED NATION IN THE *WORLD*.
THAT'S JUST ABOUT HOW IT *WENT*, RIGHT, JACK?
I REALIZE WE POOR *TRIBAL* PEOPLES ARE NOT SO *SOPHISTICATED*. I ALSO REALIZE MY SIMPLY *KNOWING* THIS HAS *MARKED* ME FOR *DEATH* --
-- AS IT HAS *YOU*.
WE NO LONGER *EXIST*, JACK. THE CIRCLE IS *COLLAPSING*.
YOU HAVE BUT *ONE* CHANCE *ONLY* --
*DEA= Drug Enforcement Agency, LCL= Los Cuarenta Ladrones= "The 40 Thieves," a dismissive colloquialism for El Ministerio de Asuntos Internacionales Armo' Servicio de Volcan Domuyo, the Volcan Domuyan Secret Police -- Jose' y Jaime

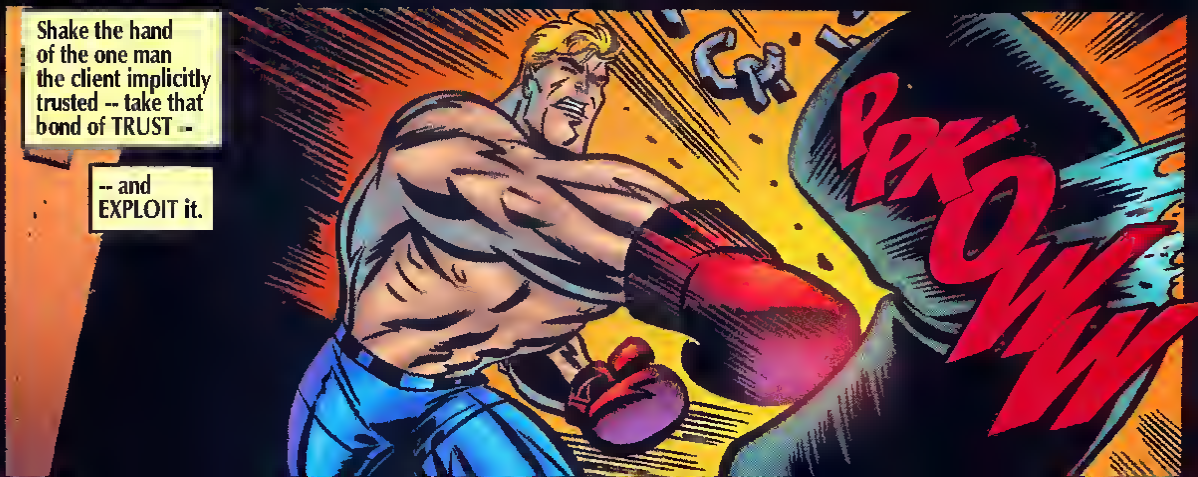
158 BILLION REASONS











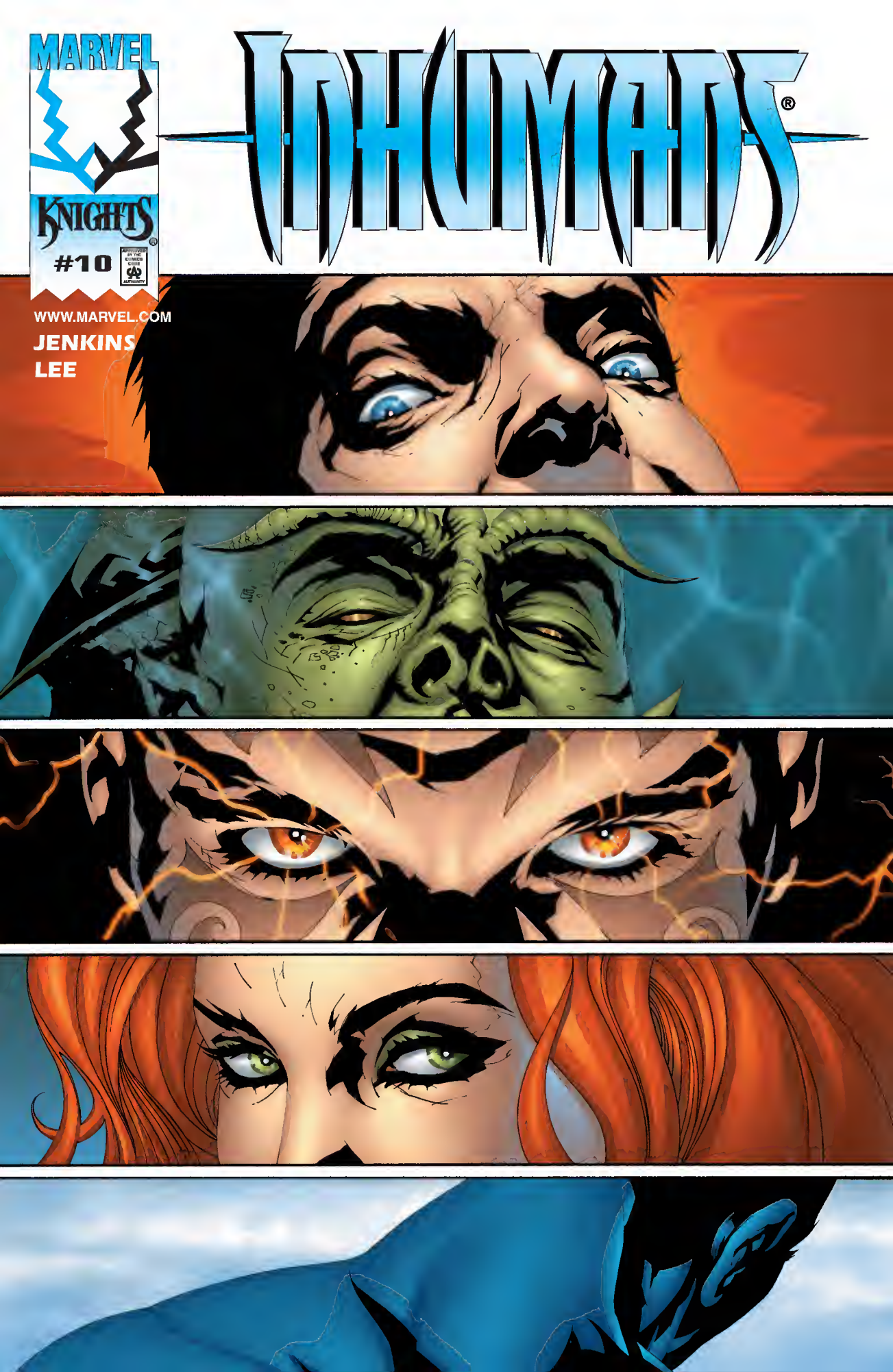

KLAK
ALL RIGHT, I GIVE UP. LOOKS LIKE A CIRCUIT BOARD OF SOME KIND.
I PULLED THAT BOARD OUT OF AN ICE CREAM TRUCK. TELL ME, CAPTAIN --
-- WHERE DOES THE RUSSIAN MOB GET THE KIND OF MONEY AND CONNECTIONS THEY WOULD NEED TO BUILD SUCH A TRUCK?
I'M NOT FOLLOWING YOU, PANTHER.
YES YOU ARE, YOU'RE JUST NOT ALLOWED TO DISCUSS IT.
YOU KNOW WHO BUILDS $30 MILLION ICE CREAM TRUCKS AND WHO HAS THE POWER TO FORCE THE RUSSIAN MOB TO DRIVE THEM AROUND --
-- AND YOU KNOW WHO IS TRYING TO TAKE OVER MY COUNTRY.
SOMEONE WITH ONE HUNDRED FIFTY-EIGHT BILLION REASONS.
T'CHALLA, OLD FRIEND --
-- I'M NOT SURE I APPRECIATE YOUR TONE.
YOU'RE RIGHT -- THERE ARE THINGS MY SECURITY CLEARANCE FORBIDS ME TO DISCUSS. SPECTRUM DYNAMICS DOES A LOT OF CLASSIFIED WORK --
-- MURDERS, BOMBINGS, ASSASSINATIONS --
WAIT ONE BLASTED MOMENT --

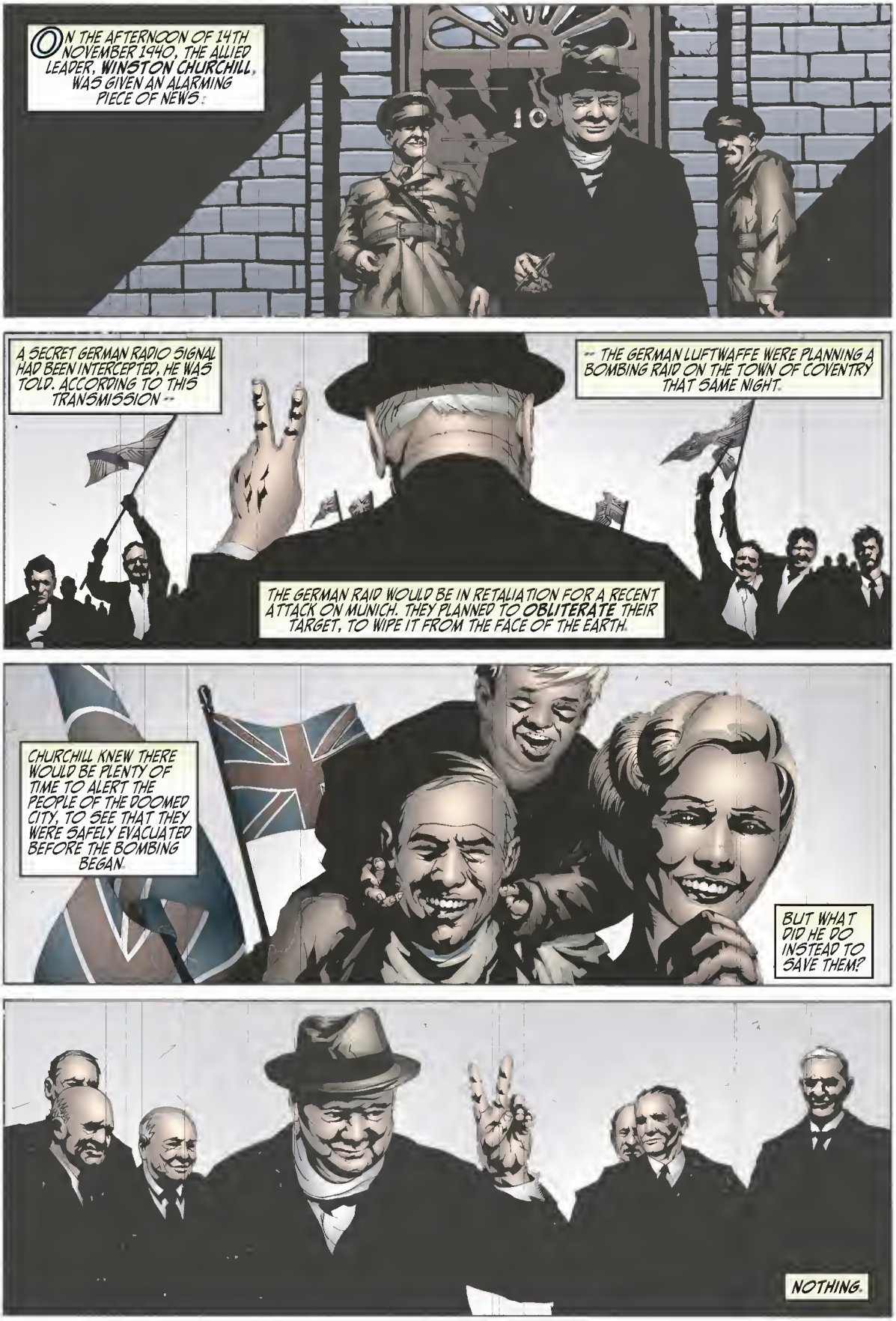

IF I THOUGHT SPECTRUM WAS DOING ANY OF THOSE THINGS, I'D BRING THEM DOWN MYSELF.
I'M NOT ALWAYS HAPPY WITH HOW OUR NATIONAL SECURITY FORCES HANDLE THINGS --
-- WHICH IS PROBABLY WHY THEY DON'T TELL ME EVERYTHING.
BUT, IF YOU'RE SAYING WHAT I THINK YOU'RE SAYING --
-- IF OUR GOVERNMENT IS SOMEHOW INVOLVED IN WAKANDA'S PROBLEMS --
-- THEN I'LL LEAD THAT CHARGE
BUT, T'CHALLA -- I'LL NEED PROOF.
IF I COULD PROVE ANY OF THIS, I'D BE DEAD ALREADY.
THAT IS THE NATURE OF POST COLD WAR ESPIONAGE, CAPTAIN.
COME -- IT IS TIME FOR ME TO COLLECT MY FRIENDS AT AVENGERS MANSION.
I HAVE KNOWN ALL ALONG. I'VE KNOWN FOR YEARS THIS WAS COMING.
WHAT I DID NOT KNOW WAS THE FACE OF MY ENEMIES -- AND MY BETRAYERS.
I HAD HOPED TO KNOW FOR CERTAIN WHO WAS TRULY LOYAL AND WHO IS NOT BEFORE MOVING TO REGAIN MY THRONE, BUT ACHEBE'S LACK OF DISCIPLINE HAS SPOILED A CAREFULLY CHOREOGRAPHED DANCE.
WITH THE SUNRISE, A HALF-DOZEN GOVERNMENTS WILL BE OUT TO KILL ME.
INCLUDING FACTIONS WITHIN THIS ONE.
T'CHALLA, LET ME HELP. I'M SURE THE AVENGERS WILL --
-- WHAT? TURN AGAINST YOUR OWN GOVERNMENT?
ARE YOU REALLY READY FOR THE CONSEQUENCES OF THAT ACTION?
NO, MY FRIEND -- WHERE I GO, YOU CANNOT FOLLOW.

COUSINS


Meanwhile, back at the RANCH...
A couple hours before ZURI and THOR were beating each other's brains out.
Next thing I knew --
--they were COUSINS.
ARRGGH!
YOU LOWLY GUTTER TRIPE -- YOU WON AGAIN!
THE SON OF ODIN HAST NO EQUAL AMONG MORTAL MEN, ZURI --
-- STILL HATH THOU THIS DAY PROVEN THY WARRIOR'S METTLE!
GRIM HOGUN HIMSELF COULD NOT DENY THEE A PLACE AT MY FATHER'S TABLE!
AND SO MUST ZURI, REGENT OF THE GREAT T'CHAKA, SALUTE THE GOD OF THUNDER --
-- WHO HAS -- =UGHNN!= -- THIS DAY -- =ACCKK!= -- PROVEN HIMSELF A FRIEND OF WAKANDA --
AH -- ZURI -- ABOUT THE HAMMER...
...WE SHOULD TALK...
ZURI -- AGENT ROSS --
-- WE ARE LEAVING. WE HAVE MUCH TO DISCUSS AND I MUST RENDER A FULL ACCOUNTING TO AGENT ROSS --
-- AND MAYBE TO US WHILE YOU'RE AT IT --
-- SOME... DISTURBING REPORTS ARE COMING IN.
THAT YOU RAMMED A TRUCK THROUGH A PENTHOUSE WALL -- AND ABDUCTED SOME PEOPLE.
SOUNDS A LITTLE RIDICULOUS.


THE REPORTS ARE TRUE.
THESE ARE MATTERS OF WAKANDAN NATIONAL SECURITY.
AND -- THAT'S IT --?
FOR NOW.
PANTHER -- THE AVENGERS -- YOUR TEAMMATES -- ARE DUE SOME EXPLANATION.
I THINK WHAT HE'S SAYING IS WE SHOULD TRUST HIM --
YOUR TRUST IS IRRELEVANT TO ME --
-- AND I AM NOT ASKING YOU FOR ANYTHING.
FACTIONS OF YOUR GOVERNMENT HAVE COMMITTED AN ACT OF WAR AGAINST MY THRONE.
I CANNOT PROVE IT -- AND SO I MUST NOT ASK FOR YOUR HELP.
YOUR CHARTER REPRESENTS A CONTUMACIOUS CONFLICT OF INTEREST. AND, MY FRIENDS, I PROMISE YOU --
-- THINGS WILL GET MUCH WORSE BEFORE THEY GET ANY BETTER.
TO LIVE, TO DIE, TO RULE AGAIN --
-- THE PANTHER MUST WALK ALONE.
NEXT:
LOTS AND LOTS OF SHOOTING. ENEMY OF THE STATE CONTINUES...


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HISTORICAL RECORDS ENLIGHTEN US AS TO WHY CHURCHILL FAILED TO ACT, IF INDEED HE **DID** FAIL.

EARLIER THAT YEAR, BRITISH INTELLIGENCE HAD RECOVERED AN **ENIGMA** DECRYPTING MACHINE FROM A SUNKEN U BOAT, WHICH ENABLED THEM TO DECIPHER THE TOP SECRET GERMAN CODE KNOWN AS ULTRA.

ULTRA GAVE THE BRITISH ACCESS TO ALL GERMAN MILITARY RADIO TRAFFIC. EVERY PLAN OF THE GERMAN HIGH COMMAND WAS NOW COMPROMISED, BUT HITLER'S STAFF REMAINED UNAWARE OF THIS FACT.



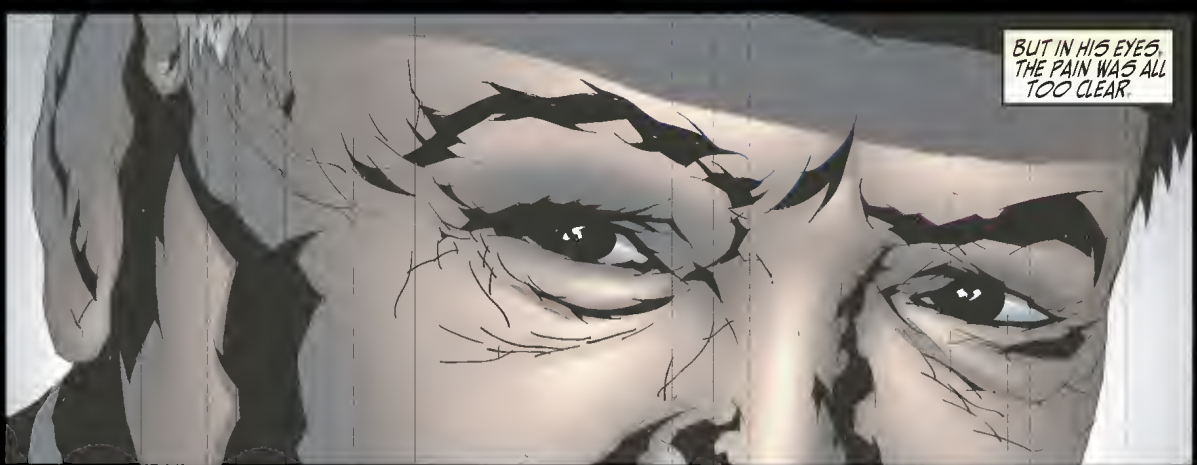


CHURCHILL WAS FORCED TO DECIDE THE FATE OF THOUSANDS. BY EVACUATING COVENTRY, THE PRIME MINISTER WOULD BE EXPOSING ULTRA AND ENDANGERING ITS USEFULNESS IN THE FUTURE.

WITH A HEAVY HEART, CHURCHILL DECIDED THE CODE WAS TOO VALUABLE A SOURCE OF INTELLIGENCE TO RISK.

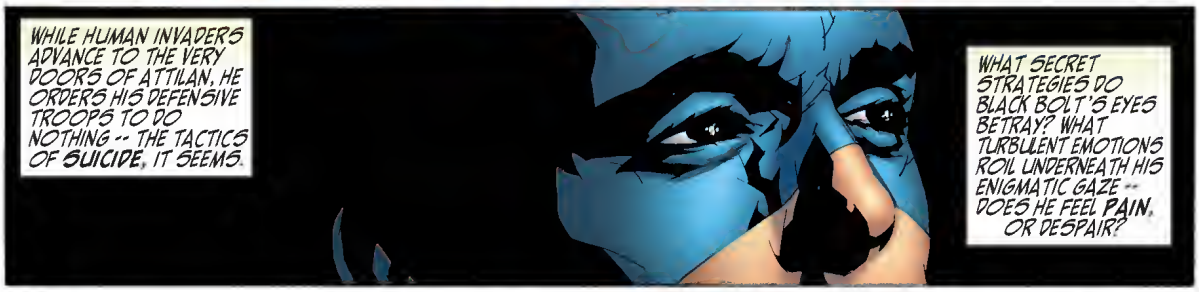
IN ORDER TO WIN THE WAR, CHURCHILL LET THE PEOPLE OF COVENTRY **BURN** THAT NIGHT, WHILE HE REMAINED IN LONDON, GOING ABOUT HIS BUSINESS AS USUAL.

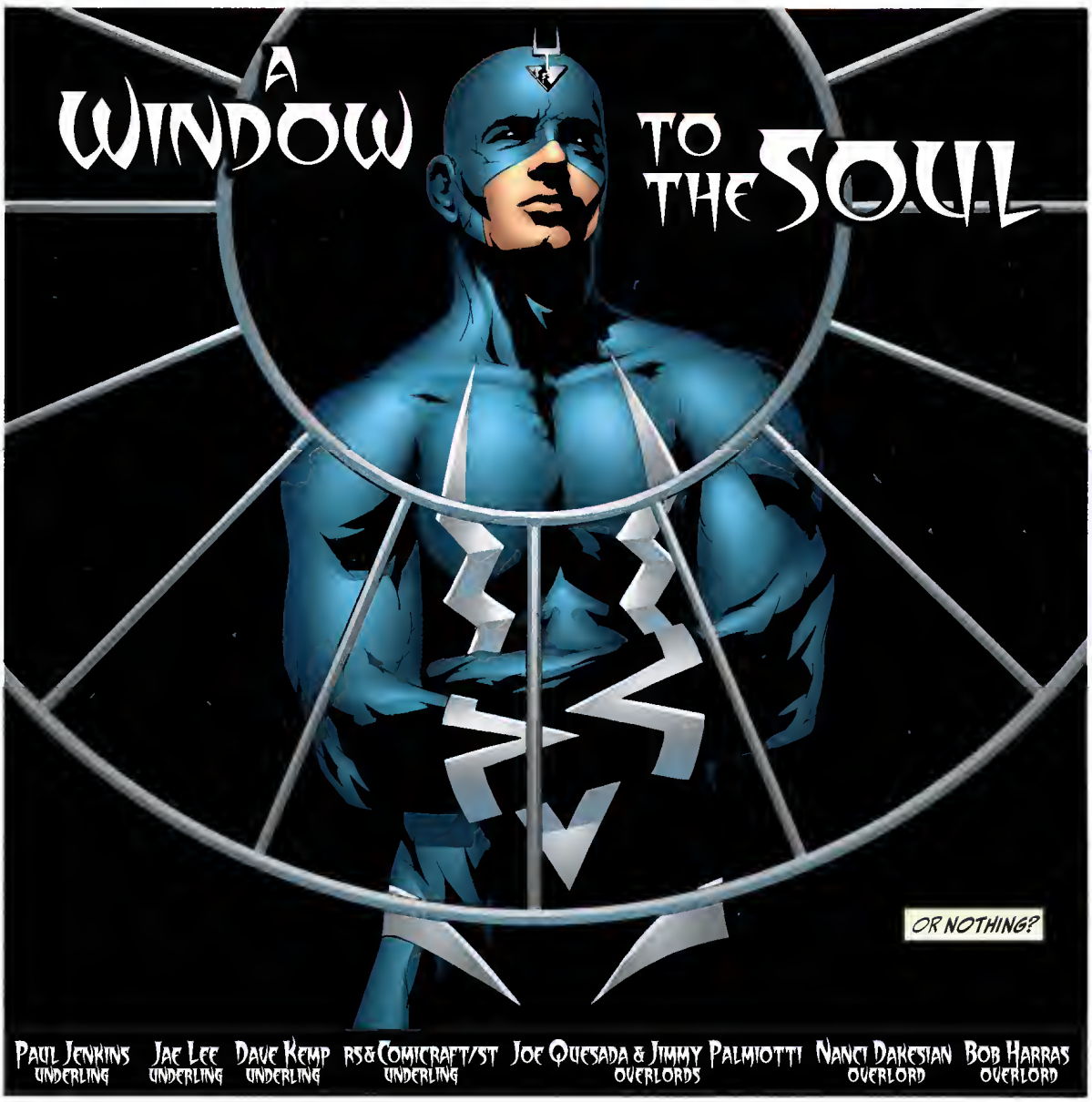


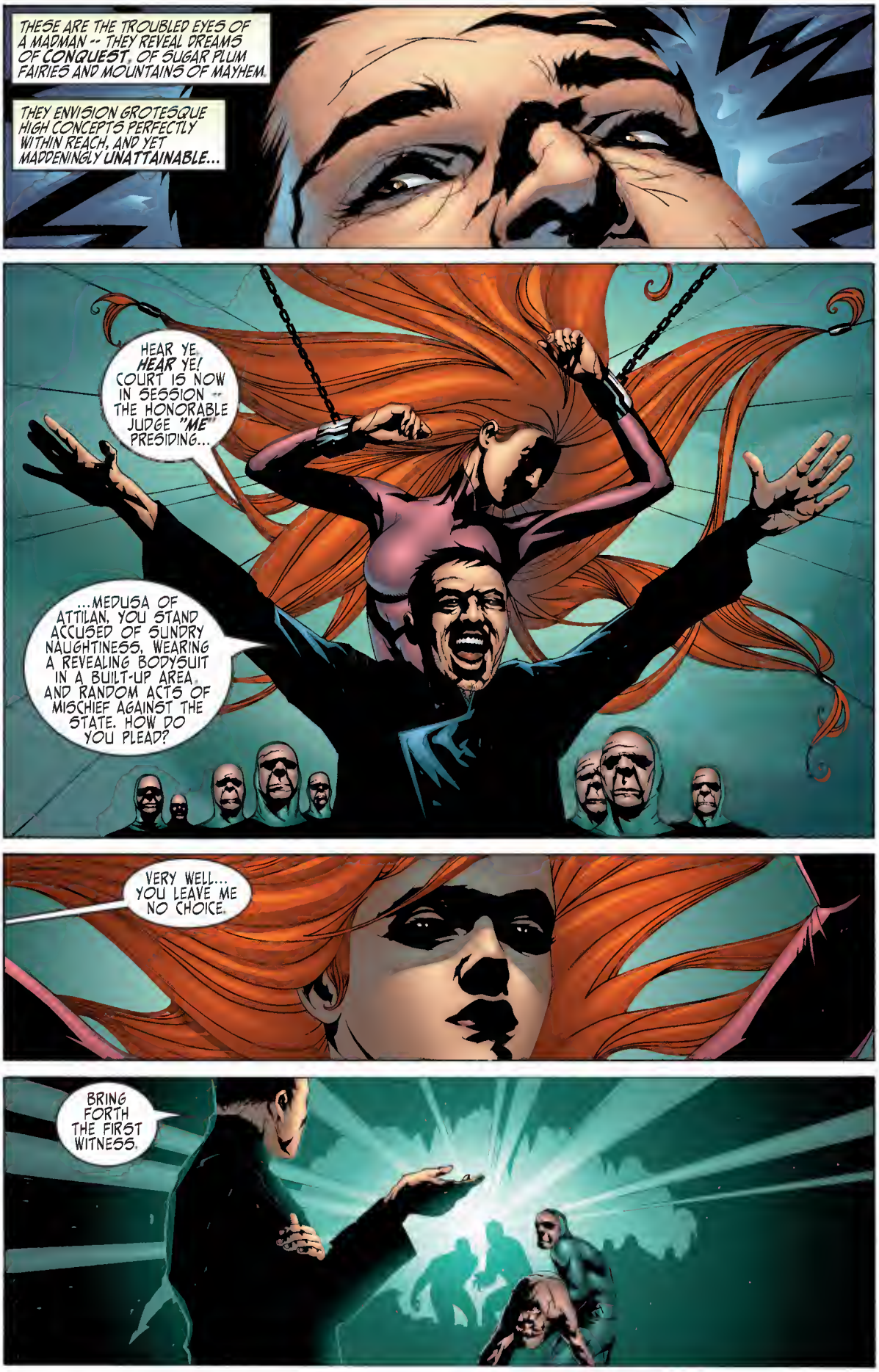


BUT IN HIS EYES, THE PAIN WAS ALL TOO CLEAR.


DECADES LATER, THE INHUMAN LEADER, BLACK BOLT, FACES THE ANNIHILATION OF HIS CITY WITH THE SAME STOIC RESOLUTION.


WHILE HUMAN INVADERS ADVANCE TO THE VERY DOORS OF ATTILAN, HE ORDERS HIS DEFENSIVE TROOPS TO DO NOTHING -- THE TACTICS OF SUICIDE, IT SEEMS.
WHAT SECRET STRATEGIES DO BLACK BOLT'S EYES BETRAY? WHAT TURBULENT EMOTIONS ROIL UNDERNEATH HIS ENIGMATIC GAZE -- DOES HE FEEL PAIN, OR DESPAIR?


A WINDOW TO THE SOUL
OR NOTHING?
PAUL JENKINS UNDERLING
JAE LEE UNDERLING
DAVE KEMP UNDERLING
RS&COMICRAFT/ST UNDERLING
JOE QUESADA & JIMMY PALMIOTTI OVERLORDS
NANCI DAKESIAN OVERLORD
BOB HARRAS OVERLORD


THESE ARE THE TROUBLED EYES OF A MADMAN -- THEY REVEAL DREAMS OF CONQUEST, OF SUGAR PLUM FAIRIES AND MOUNTAINS OF MAYHEM.
THEY ENVISION GROTESQUE HIGH CONCEPTS PERFECTLY WITHIN REACH, AND YET MADDENINGLY UNATTAINABLE...
HEAR YE, HEAR YE! COURT IS NOW IN SESSION -- THE HONORABLE JUDGE "ME" PRESIDING...
...MEDUSA OF ATTILAN, YOU STAND ACCUSED OF SUNDRY NAUGHTINESS, WEARING A REVEALING BODYSUIT IN A BUILT-UP AREA, AND RANDOM ACTS OF MISCHIEF AGAINST THE STATE. HOW DO YOU PLEAD?
VERY WELL... YOU LEAVE ME NO CHOICE.
BRING FORTH THE FIRST WITNESS.


THESE ARE THE EYES OF AN ANIMAL, TRAPPED INSIDE A CAGE...
UM. WELL... AS YOU CAN PLAINLY SEE, OH MY BROTHERS, OUR POOR COUSIN WOZ IS OVERCOME BY THE MOMENT.
BUT I CAN ASSURE YOU, HE TOLD ME BEFORE HE WENT BONKERS THAT HE PERSONALLY BLAMED BLACK BOLT FOR EVERY-THING --
IN THE NAME OF EVOLUTION, MAXIMUS -- HOW COULD YOU DO SUCH A THING TO AN INNOCENT BOY? TO STEAL HIS TERRIGENESIS FROM HIM IS AN UNPARDONABLE CRIME.
PLEASE... YOU MUST RELEASE HIM FROM YOUR TELEPATHIC CONTROL -- CAN'T YOU SEE IT'S KILLING HIM?
I'VE TOLD YOU BEFORE ABOUT BEING MELODRAMATIC IN FRONT OF THE HIRED HELP, FLUFFYCHEEKS. NOW, BE A GOOD GIRL AND KEEP THAT ACID TONGUE TO YOURSELF FOR ONCE. HMMH?
AS YOU WISH, MY PRINCE...


HH-
AHH!
YAKKK
YAKKK...
LLETT...
GGKK...
YOU VILE TOAD... hhh... I'LL MAKE SURE YOU NEVER HARM ANOTHER SOUL --
LET GO!


NOW, KITTENCAKES... *HUFFY*...WHAT'VE I TOLD YOU ABOUT MAKING YOUR LITTLE POOKIE MADDER THAN HE ALREADY *IS*. *HUFFY*... HOW ABOUT A BIG KISS TO SAY YOU'RE SORRY. *Hmm?*
Mm. YOU TASTE EVEN BETTER THAN YOU *USED* TO.


THESE ARE THE EYES OF FRUSTRATION.
I DON'T UNDERSTAND IT, COUSIN -- SURELY, WE'D HAVE RECEIVED WORD FROM BLACK BOLT BY NOW -- BUT NONE HAS BEEN FORTHCOMING. WHAT ARE WE TO DO?
PATIENCE.
WE MUST HAVING FAITH IN OUR KING. WHILE HIS INACTION PASSING STRANGE SEEMS, THERE MUST BE METHOD IN'T.
I... I CONFESS, I PERCEIVE NOT WHY OUR QUEEN IS LEFT TO MAXIMUS' INTENT AS WE STAND BY IN IDLE FASHION.
BUT NOW THAT NAMOR DOES REFUSE TO AID US, A DECISION MUST BE MADE. OF CERTAIN, BLACK BOLT'S CALL TO ARMS WILL COME TO US SOON.
THE SITUATION NECESSITATES IT, TRITON. I DON'T KNOW HOW MUCH LONGER WE CAN HOLD OUT BEFORE WE'RE OVERCOME. GORGON, WHAT DEVELOPMENTS OUTSIDE AT THE BATTLEFRONT --?
APATHY.
WHY ARE YOU ASKING ME?

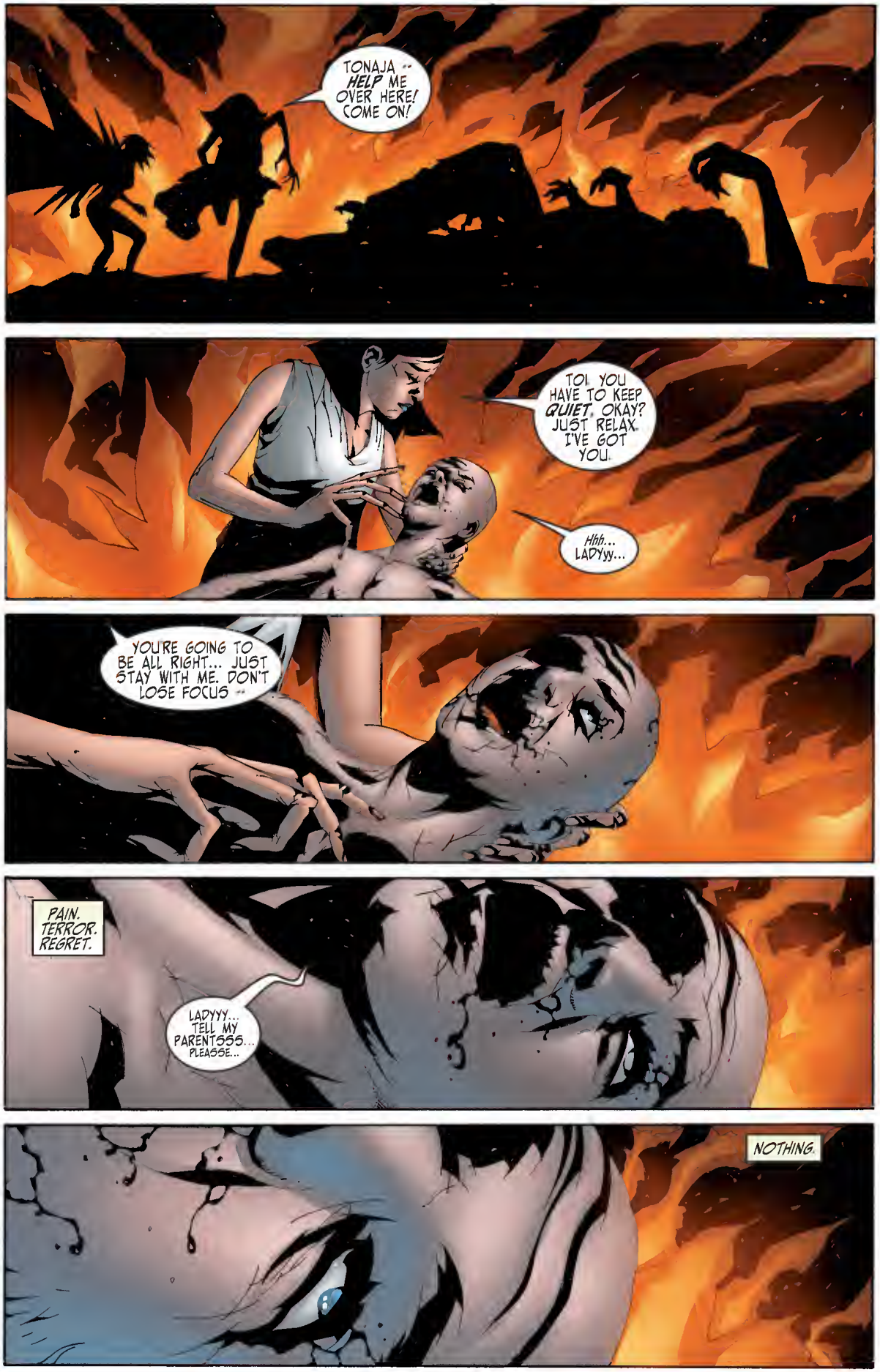

AMBITION.
THEY'RE CAVING, JARZINHO. I JUST KNOW IT. FOR AS LONG AS WE KEEP PUSHING, THEY'LL SIMPLY ALLOW THEMSELVES TO BE PUSHED --
GREED.
RESENTMENT.
BOREDOM.
GREED.
JEALOUSY.
GREED.


DUTY.
...NOW THAT BOTH PERIMETER DEFENSES ARE INOPERABLE, OUR TELEKINETICS ARE HAVING TO SHOULDER THE LOAD MENTALLY. BUT THEY'RE NOT GOING TO KEEP THE HUMANS AT BAY *INDEFINITELY.*
"THE STRAIN'S ALREADY BEGINNING TO SHOW. FOR EACH ONE THAT GOES DOWN, ANOTHER GAP APPEARS IN OUR DEFENSES.
"UNTIL BLACK BOLT GIVES US THE ORDER TO ATTACK, WE'RE GOING TO HAVE TO GIVE THEM TIME TO *REST* AND PLUG THE HOLES AS BEST AS WE CAN."
HONOR. COURAGE.
NAHREES, YOU'LL BE PAIRED WITH THE CALIBAN AT THE WESTERN PERIMETER. AND WE'LL WORK AROUND FROM THERE.
NEIFI... *WHERE* IS TONAJA...?
HI.


HOW'S DINU?
HE'S, Uh... HE'S OKAY.
I MEAN... HE WAS CUT UP PRETTY BADLY. I MANAGED TO STABILIZE THE INJURY ENOUGH TO. Uh...
...YOU KNOW...
KALIKYA... YOU HAVE TO BELIEVE ME, I HAD NO IDEA -- ABOUT YOUR HEALING POWERS, I MEAN. EVEN YOU DIDN'T KNOW WHEN WE CAME OUT OF TERRIGENESIS.
I DIDN'T MEAN TO HURT YOU. IT'S... IT'S JUST THAT WHEN YOU DIDN'T CHANGE, I DIDN'T THINK WE COULD BE BEST FRIENDS ANYMORE. I WAS THINKING... MAYBE WHEN THIS IS ALL OVER, WE COULD... YOU KNOW...
I DON'T THINK SO.


THESE EYES REFLECT MANY THINGS -- A SIMPLE, HONEST MIND, OVERCOME BY TURMOIL.
Nnn... Nnhh...!
THERE! GO FOR THE BREACH BEFORE THEY REPAIR IT --
-- QUICKLY!
BA-KOOM

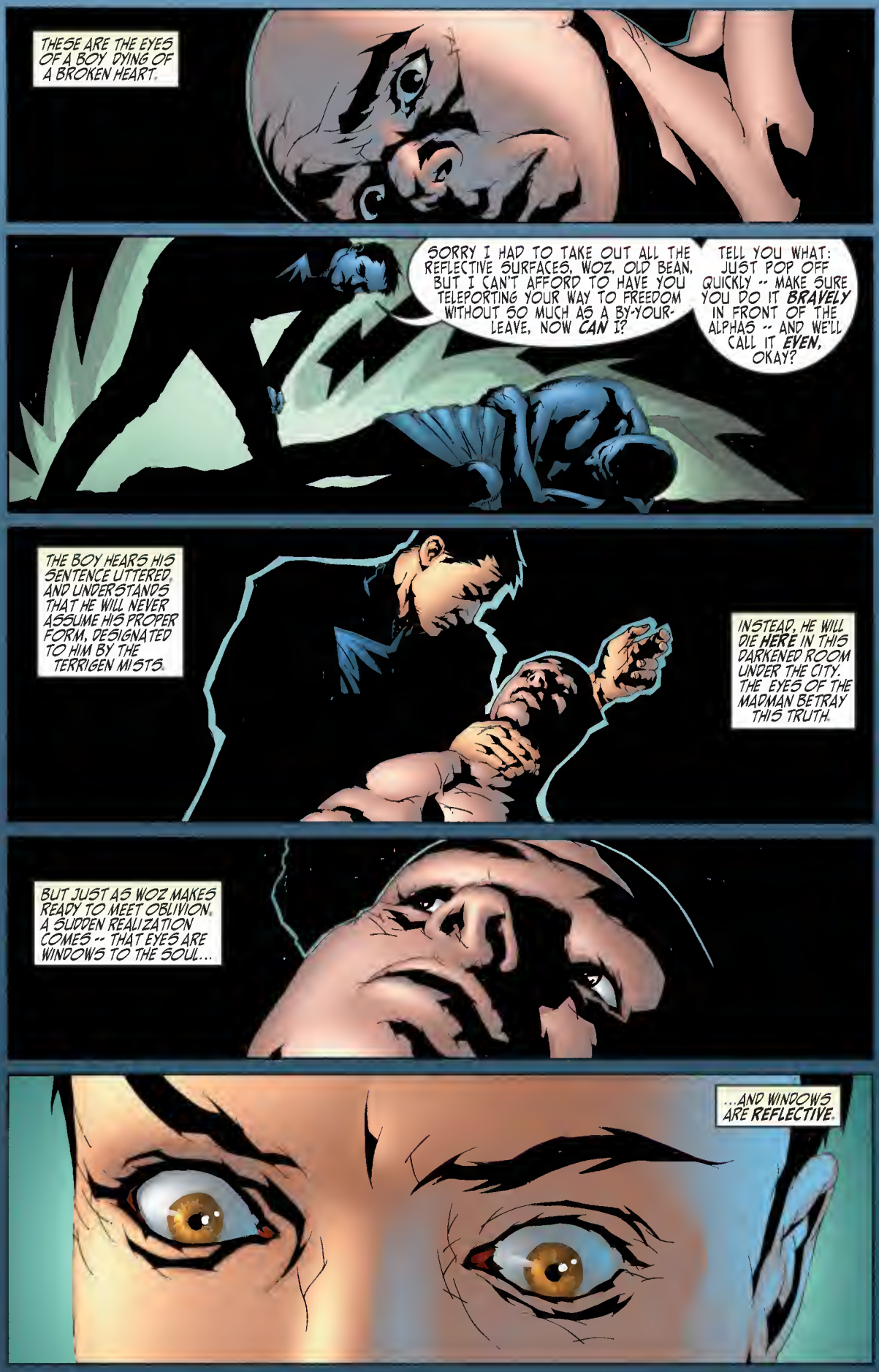

THEY REFLECT HORRIFIED REALIZATION.
Oh...
GALLANTRY.
ALARMS, LADY -- MUCH ALARMS!
FIRES IS COMING!
BA-BOOM
TO!!


TONAJA -- HELP ME OVER HERE! COME ON!
TOI. YOU HAVE TO KEEP QUIET, OKAY? JUST RELAX. I'VE GOT YOU.
Hhh... LADYyy...
YOU'RE GOING TO BE ALL RIGHT... JUST STAY WITH ME. DON'T LOSE FOCUS --
PAIN. TERROR. REGRET.
LADYYY... TELL MY PARENTSSS... PLEASSE...
NOTHING.


NOTHING!
WE ARE ASSAILED BY THESE NOXIOUS HUMANS, AND BLACK BOLT DOES NOTHING. HIS LUNATIC BROTHER, MAXIMUS, ESCAPES INTO THE SUBSTRUCTURE AND HE DOES NOTHING.
OUR DEFENSES ARE TORN DOWN, OUR QUEEN IS KIDNAPPED AND OUR TROOPS ARE MURDERED, AND HE STILL DOES NOTHING!
WELL, I'M NOT GOING TO STAND BY AND ALLOW IT ANY LONGER. SO HELP ME, I WILL FORCE BLACK BOLT TO RELINQUISH COMMAND OF OUR FORCES TO ME OR DIE IN THE ATTEMPT.
I'D RATHER DIE THAN DO NOTHING.
REASON.
I CANNOT ALLOW IT, BROTHER.


OUT OF MY WAY, KARNAK -- AS FIFTH IN LINE TO THE THRONE, I HAVE THE RIGHT TO PURSUE TITLE AGAINST BLACK BOLT, FOR THE SAKE OF ALL ATTILAN.
LOOK WHAT HE'S *DOING* TO US. FOR GRANTOR'S SAKE!
THE RIGHT OF CHALLENGE IS YOURS, OF COURSE. BUT YOU WILL HAVE TO PASS *ME* FIRST. THAT IS *MY* RIGHT, AS BLACK BOLT'S TRUSTED ADVISOR AND AS ONE WHO WISHES TO PROTECT YOU.
SO *BE* IT --
--UNNHH!


Nnn... GET OUT OF MY... WAY!
LISTEN TO ME, GORGON... YOU MUST TRUST BLACK BOLT... FOR A SHORT WHILE LONGER... TRUST HIM...
...Hhh... WHY?
I CAN'T TELL YOU.


THESE ARE THE EYES OF A BOY DYING OF A BROKEN HEART.
SORRY I HAD TO TAKE OUT ALL THE REFLECTIVE SURFACES, WOZ, OLD BEAN, BUT I CAN'T AFFORD TO HAVE YOU TELEPORTING YOUR WAY TO FREEDOM WITHOUT SO MUCH AS A BY-YOUR-LEAVE, NOW CAN I?
TELL YOU WHAT: JUST POP OFF QUICKLY -- MAKE SURE YOU DO IT BRAVELY IN FRONT OF THE ALPHAS -- AND WE'LL CALL IT EVEN, OKAY?
THE BOY HEARS HIS SENTENCE UTTERED, AND UNDERSTANDS THAT HE WILL NEVER ASSUME HIS PROPER FORM, DESIGNATED TO HIM BY THE TERRIGEN MISTS.
INSTEAD, HE WILL DIE HERE IN THIS DARKENED ROOM UNDER THE CITY. THE EYES OF THE MADMAN BETRAY THIS TRUTH.
BUT JUST AS WOZ MAKES READY TO MEET OBLIVION, A SUDDEN REALIZATION COMES -- THAT EYES ARE WINDOWS TO THE SOUL...
...AND WINDOWS ARE REFLECTIVE.


NNNAAHH!


Aaahhh! IT HURTS... IT HURTS!
GET OUT OF MY MIND!
...YOU... STOLE MY TRUE CONFIGURATION FROM ME... I WANT IT BACK!
GIVE IT BACK TO ME... OR I'LL DIE INSIDE YOUR HEAD.
HRAAhh! TAKE IT, THEN, WOZ. YOU UNGRATEFUL LITTLE BEAST! GO AHEAD AND BE THE FREAK YOU WERE DESTINED TO BE, AND SEE IF I CARE --!
I AM NOT WOZ. I AM MORE.


On these eyes, emptiness. Nothing at all.
Or perhaps...
...perhaps there is something. Hidden.
A secret?


IT WAS YOUR FAULT! YOU DISTRACTED ME... YOU MADE ME LOSE MY CONCENTRATION -- ON PURPOSE!
AND... AND NOW I'VE LOST HIM.
A... SNFF... A MAN CAN ONLY TAKE SO MUCH... I WARNED YOU WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN. BUT YOU WOULDN'T LISTEN TO ME.
IT WAS YOUR FAULT... SNFF... Ah-Hehh...
...IT WASN'T MY FAULT...


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THE UPPER HAND





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JUNTA
The client went for Danny Vincent.
¿DANNY -- CUÁNDO VA USTED ENCONTRAR A UNA MUCHACHA BUENA Y ESTABLECERSE?
TUESDAY, MA. IT'S IN MY BOOK.
RIGHT BACK, MA -- LEFT SOMETHING IN THE CAR.
Now, it was only a RUMOR, but word had it Danny Vincent's real name was Vicente, and Vicente was a high-ranking official of the LCL, the Volcan Domuyan Secret Service.
Danny helped arm extremist factions in Ghudaza as part of a dirty tricks campaign to bring down the client's government.
The Ghudaza civil war turned into an ethnic slaughter, but to Danny it was just business --
-- even though he KNEW it would bring a Panther to his door.
GUESS I SHOULD BE SCARED NOW.
LOOK -- NOT FOR NOTHING -- BUT IF I HADN'T WORKED FOR GHUDAZA...
...JACK TAYLOR WOULDA JUST SUBBED THAT JOB OUT TO THE HAND OR MOSSAD OR SOMEBODY.
THE VOLCAN DOMUYO WOULDN'T GET THOSE G-8 CHIPS TAYLOR CARROT-AND-STICKED US WITH.
TO SERVE MY COUNTRY. I DO WHAT I DO. I SHOOK A HAND AND DID A PIECE OF BUSINESS.
IN THE TRUNK, I GOT A CROWBAR AND A ROLL OF DUCT TAPE. THAT'S ABOUT THE EXTENT OF MY HI-TECH WEAPONS' CACHE.
BUT IN TERMS OF THE TUNE-UP THAT IS SURE TO BE THE HIGH-LIGHT OF TONIGHT'S PERFORMANCE --
-- HIGH ON THE SHORT LIST OF THINGS YOUR HIGHNESS NEEDS TO KNOW ABOUT ME IS I DON'T ROLL OVER. BAD FOR BUSINESS.


THIS ISN'T ABOUT LCL'S ARMING THE GHUDAZAI --
-- DESTABILIZING THE REGION -- ENABLING A BLOODY ETHNIC WAR AND FORCING THOUSANDS OF GHUDAZAI REFUGEES INTO WAKANDA --
-- FOR THE *EXPRESS PURPOSE* OF TOPPLING MY GOVERNMENT
THIS IS *NEW BUSINESS*.
YOU WRITE *BOOKS* FOR THE NSA... I WANT YOU TO WRITE ABOUT THEIR COVERT OPS IN VOLCAN DOMUYO.
THE ADVANCED G-B COMPUTER PROCESSORS SPECTRUM DYNAMICS TRADED FOR YOUR HELP WITH THE GHUDAZAI HAVE *CRACKS* IN THEM
IMPOSSIBLE TO SEE WITH THE HUMAN EYE. THE CHIPS ARE GUARANTEED TO *FAIL CATASTROPHICALLY* WITHIN FIVE YEARS
BY WHICH TIME, US INTEL'S PLANS FOR CRASHING THE VOLCAN DOMUYAN ECONOMY -- AND BANKRUPTING THE DESPOTS AND MOBSTERS WHO THRIVE THERE -- WILL COME TO FRUITION. IN *OTHER* WORDS --
-- TODAY IT IS *ME*. TOMORROW IT WILL BE *YOU*.
I'LL *THINK* ABOUT IT. HAVE A LOOK.
I WILL CONTACT YOU SHORTLY. AND ONE MORE THING...
KERRAACKK


... THAT WAS FOR ARMING THE GHUDAZA!
SU CENA ESTÁ PONIÉNDOSE FRÍA.
I KNOW. I'LL NUKE IT. MA...
BETTER COME TAKE A LOOK AT THIS.
¿CUÁL ES HIJO?
KING T'CHALLA JUST TRIED TO *TURN* ME
PARTITION A PROTECTED DRIVE AND SCAN THAT DISC
I'M SURE THERE'S A *TRACKING DEVICE* FUSED BETWEEN THE DISC LAYERS, AND SOME *CHEMICAL* TRACER I HAVE TO GET OFF MY *HANDS* SOMEHOW...
...IT'S WHAT *I* WOULDA DONE...
TING
USTED NO DEBE COMER PONIÉNDOSE DE PIÉ, ESTIMADO DANNY.
FOOD GOES *DOWN* EASIER WHEN I STAND UP, MA.
HELPS ME *THINK*— ABOUT...
...WHAT THE HECK I'VE GOTTEN MYSELF *INTO*...

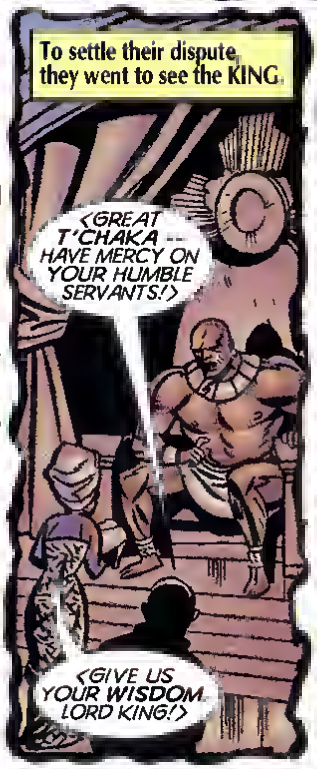
HIS FATHER'S SON



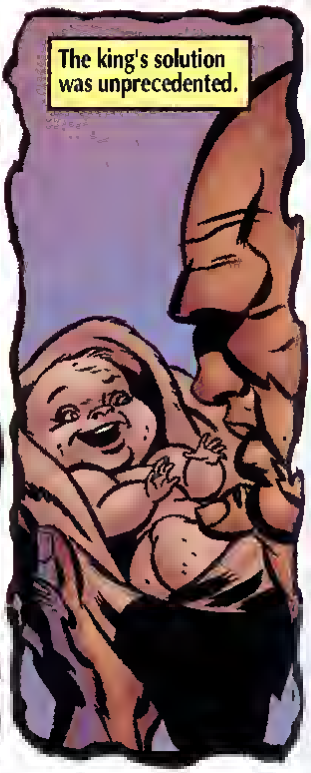




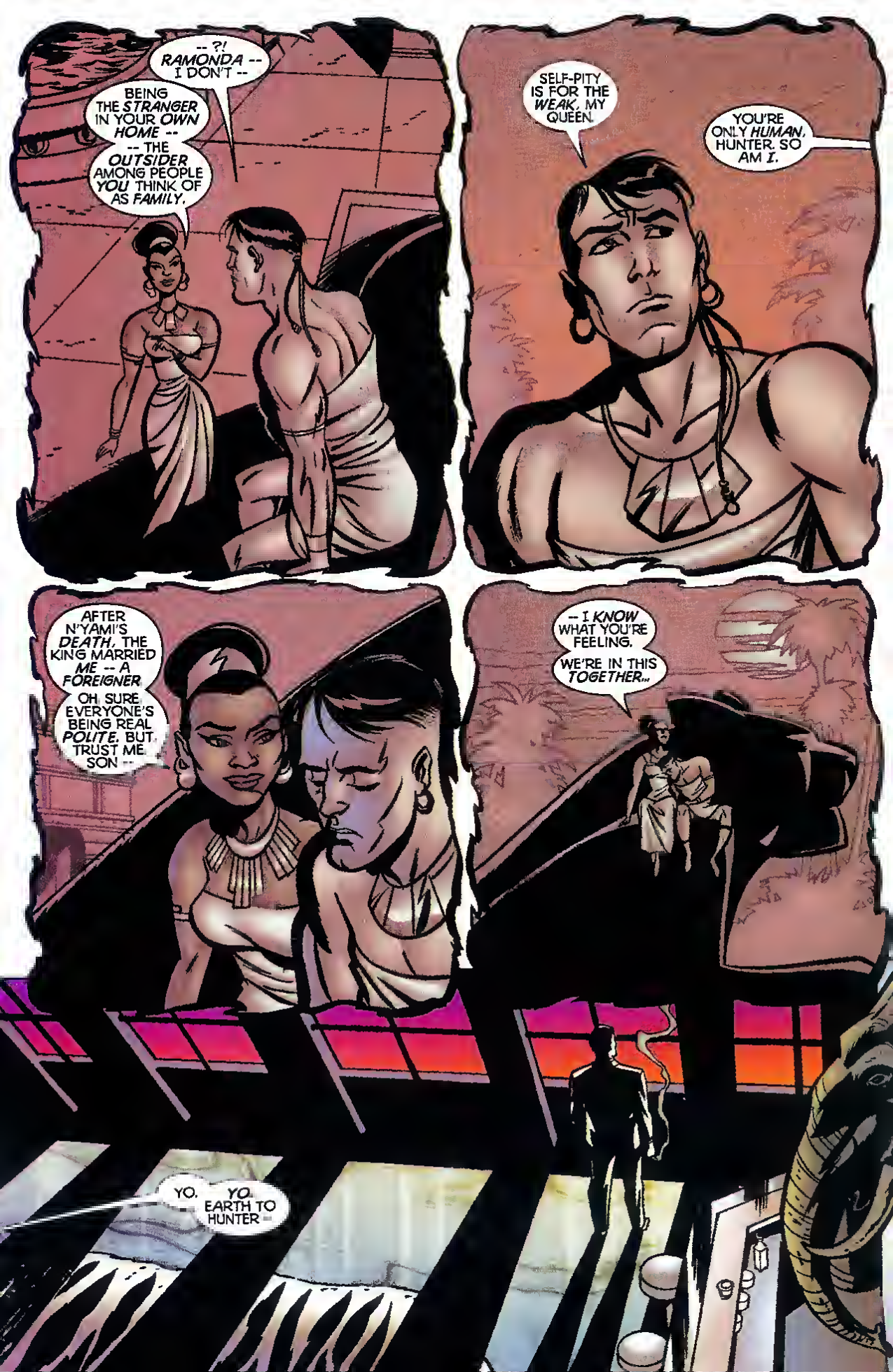








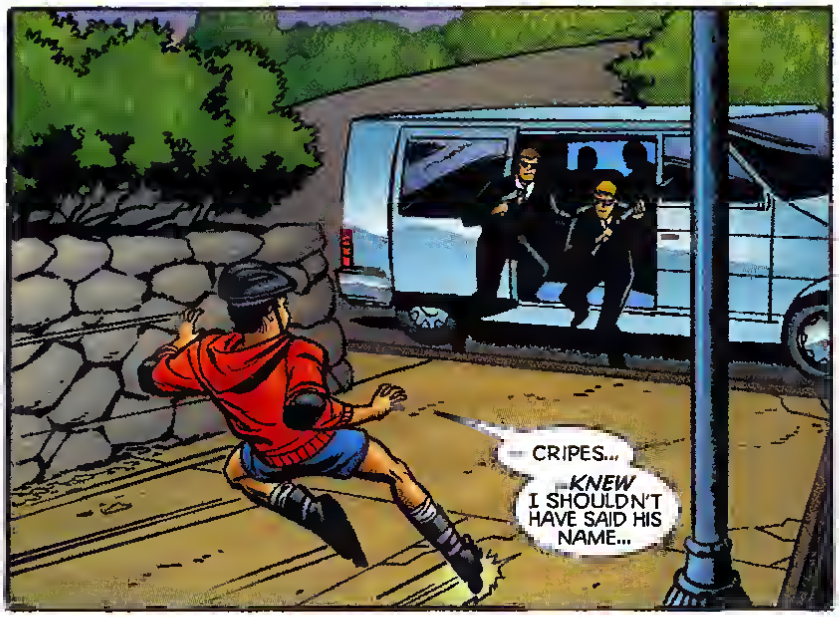

Wakanda had a new SON.
-- UNCONFIRMED REPORTS OF AN EMERGENCY MEETING OF THE U.N. SECURITY COUNCIL...
They called him HUNTER.
The king's son.
...THE LEADER OF AN AFRICAN NATION HAS LEVELED SERIOUS CHARGES AGAINST THE MEMBER STATES...
Or, at least, he WAS.
MUST BE ROUGH.

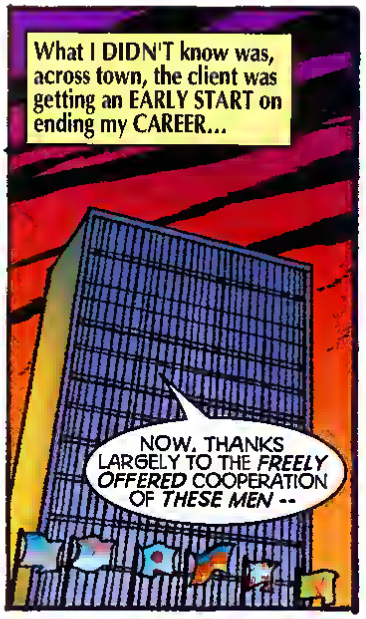

-- ?! RAMONDA -- I DON'T --
BEING THE STRANGER IN YOUR OWN HOME --
-- THE OUTSIDER AMONG PEOPLE YOU THINK OF AS FAMILY.
SELF-PITY IS FOR THE WEAK, MY QUEEN.
YOU'RE ONLY HUMAN, HUNTER. SO AM I.
AFTER N'YAMI'S DEATH, THE KING MARRIED ME -- A FOREIGNER.
OH, SURE, EVERYONE'S BEING REAL POLITE. BUT TRUST ME, SON --
-- I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE FEELING.
WE'RE IN THIS TOGETHER...
YO.
YO. EARTH TO HUNTER --


...KING T'CHALLA, THE SO-CALLED "BLACK PANTHER," IS RUMORED TO BE ADDRESSING THE SECURITY COUNCIL NOW...
-- HOW MUCH LONGER DO WE HAVE TO DATE BEFORE I GET WHAT WE AGREED TO LAST NIGHT?
T'CHALLA IS VERY BUSY, MS. LYNNE...
...BITING EVERY HAND THAT FEEDS HIM.
GET DRESSED.
I'VE TAKEN THE LIBERTY OF BUYING YOU SOME NEW CLOTHES.
THANKS. ANYTHING WOULD BE BETTER THAN THE NYPD SWEATS THEY LOANED ME.
I CAN'T TELL YOU HOW THRILLED I AM TO HAVE MY LIFE TORN APART EVERY TIME ONE OF T'CHALLA'S ENEMIES DECIDES TO SADDLE UP.
I SWEAR -- EVERY TIME -- "STEP ONE: KIDNAP MONICA."
LOVE HAS ITS PRICE, MS LYNNE.
T'CHALLA LOVES YOU MORE THAN LIFE -- PERHAPS MORE THAN WAKANDA --
-- WHICH WE BOTH KNOW IS THE REASON HE CALLED OFF YOUR ENGAGEMENT.
I FIND YOUR ANNOYANCE... MANIPULATIVE.
THAT'S IT -- YOU'VE HIT IT ON THE HEAD, THERE, HUNTER.
I'M FAKING ANNOYANCE JUST TO MANIPULATE YOU
THE COPS AND THE SPIES INVADING MY LIFE HAVE ZERO TO DO WITH IT. ANYTHING ELSE I SHOULD KNOW ABOUT YOU --?
YES.
I WELCOME THE WAR.
I WELCOME THE END OF LIES AND HYPOCRISY.
GOD KNOWS I'VE WAITED LONG ENOUGH FOR IT.

THE ACT

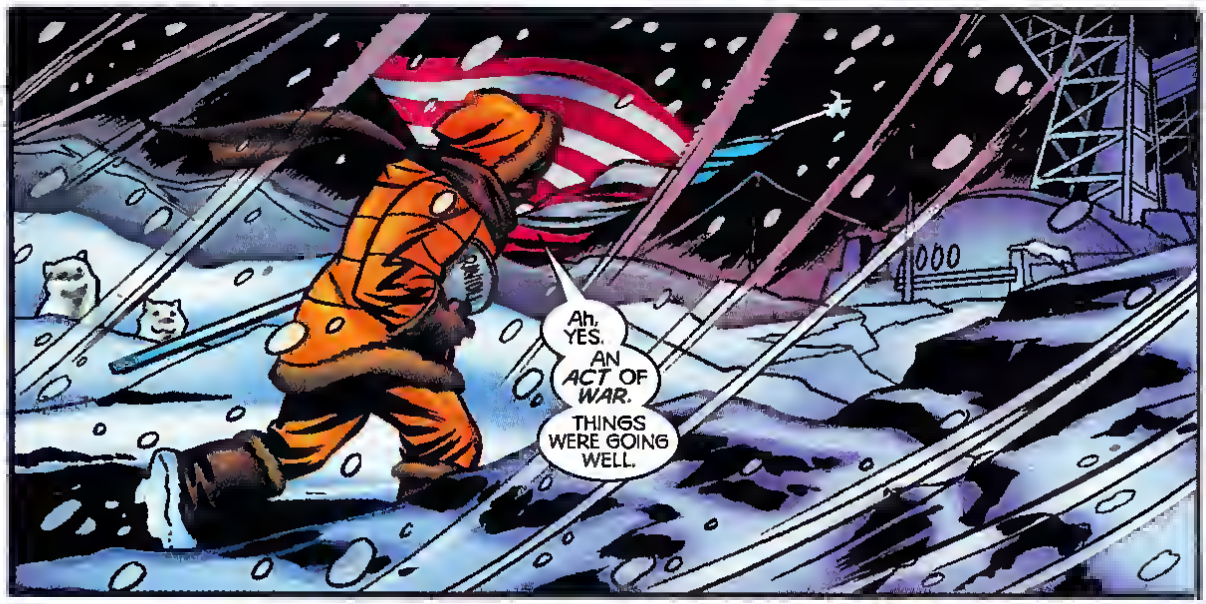

Across town, I was working out...
NO -- NO -- NIKKI --
-- I DON'T *KNOW* WHAT IT MEANS. HE SNATCHED UP JACK TAYLOR -- *JACK TAYLOR* --!
I'M SCARED TO EVEN *SAY* THE MAN'S *NAME*. AND THE CLIENT JUST GRABS HIM UP LIKE HE'S *STYMIE* --

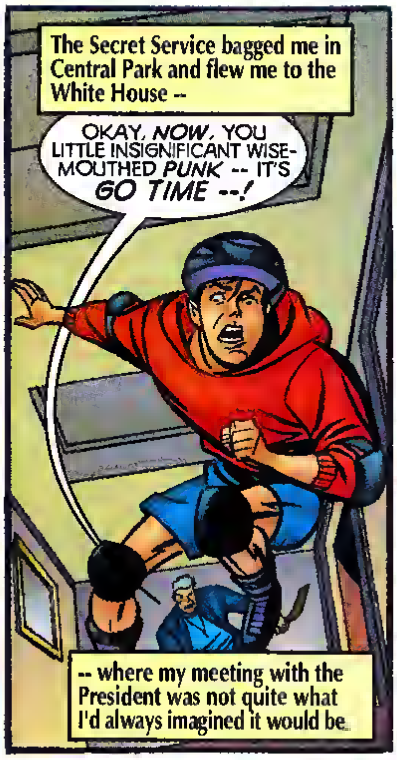

-- CRIPES...
--*KNEW* I SHOULDN'T HAVE SAID HIS NAME...


What I DIDN'T know was, across town, the client was getting an EARLY START on ending my CAREER...
NOW, THANKS LARGELY TO THE *FREELY OFFERED* COOPERATION OF *THESE MEN* --

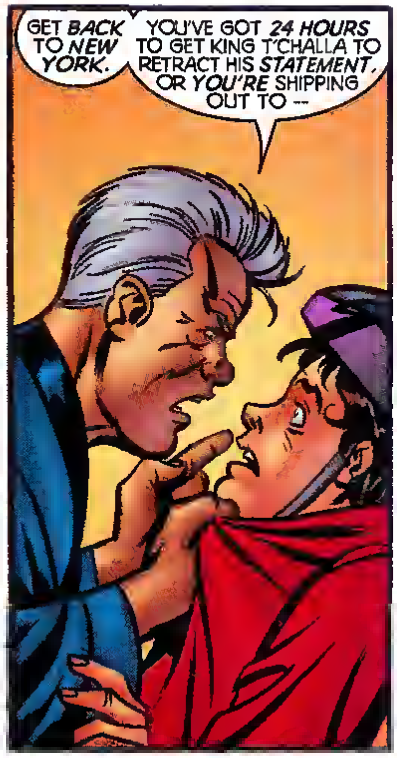

...calling an EMERGENCY SESSION of the U.N. Security Council.
-- TO WHOM I HAVE GRANTED *POLITICAL ASYLUM* -- WE NOW HAVE CREDIBLE, SUBSTANTIAL EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE --
GAPON

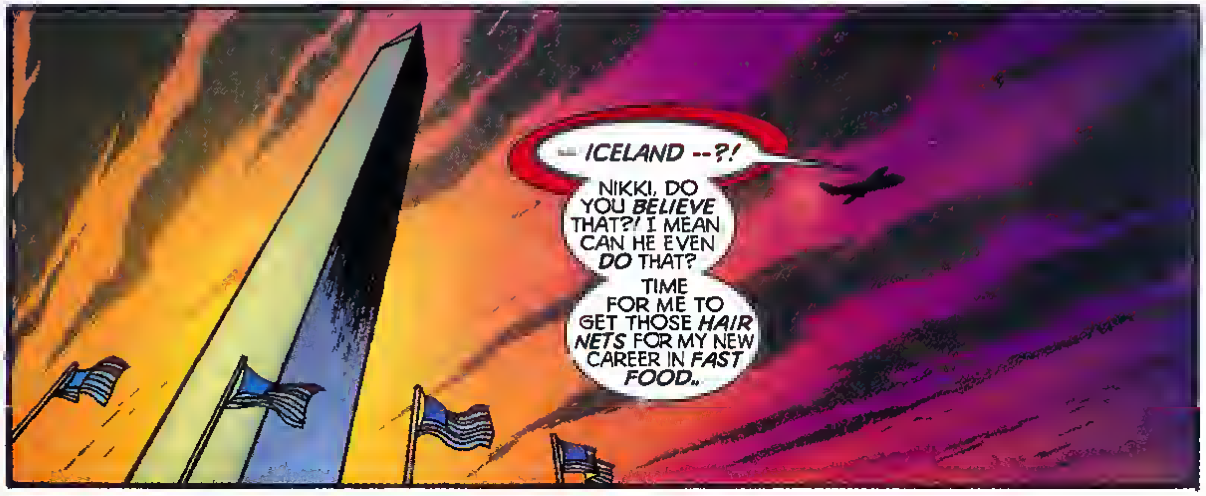

-- THAT FACTIONS WITHIN THE U.S. INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY HAVE EFFECTED A COUP D'ETAT IN MY HOMELAND. MY FRIENDS --
-- THIS CONSTITUTES AN ACT OF *WAR*.

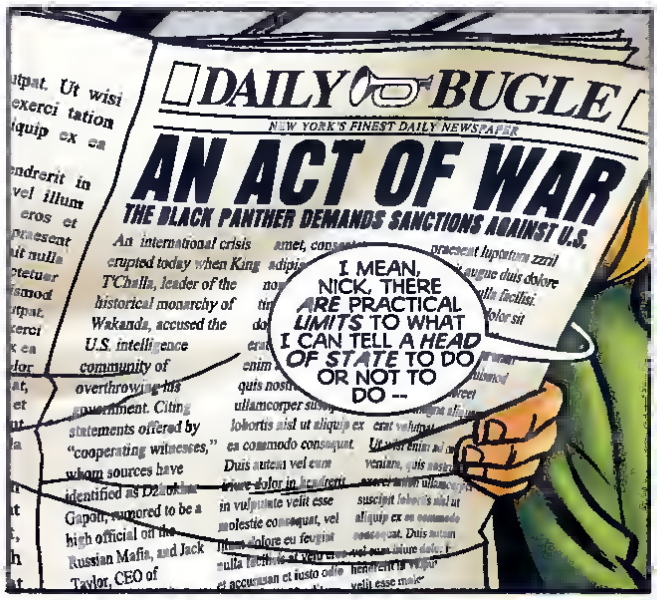

Ah, YES. AN ACT OF WAR.
THINGS WERE GOING WELL.


The Secret Service bagged me in Central Park and flew me to the White House --
OKAY, NOW, YOU LITTLE INSIGNIFICANT WISE-MOUTHED PUNK -- IT'S GO TIME --!
-- where my meeting with the President was not quite what I'd always imagined it would be.

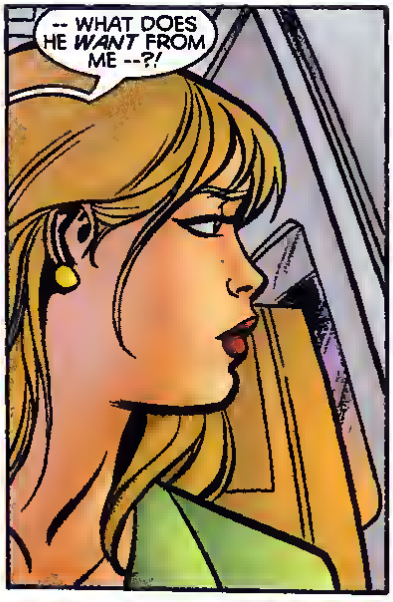

SIR -- SIR -- FIRING ME, A LOW-LEVEL OCP HANDLER, WILL JUST MAKE YOU LOOK WORSE
WHAT YOU NEED IS SPIN!
*OCP = Office of the Chief of Protocol - J&J

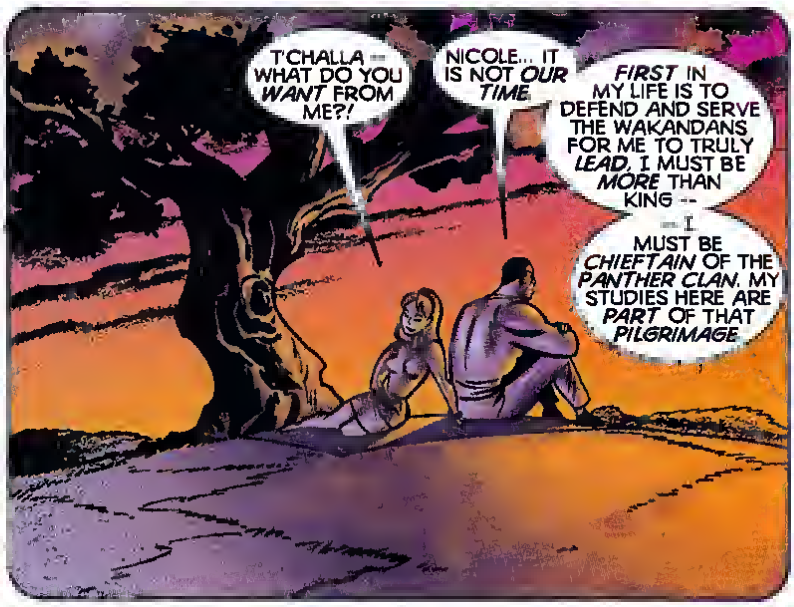

GET BACK TO NEW YORK.
YOU'VE GOT 24 HOURS TO GET KING T'CHALLA TO RETRACT HIS STATEMENT, OR YOU'RE SHIPPING OUT TO --


-- ICELAND --?!
NIKKI, DO YOU BELIEVE THAT?! I MEAN CAN HE EVEN DO THAT?
TIME FOR ME TO GET THOSE HAIR NETS FOR MY NEW CAREER IN FAST FOOD.

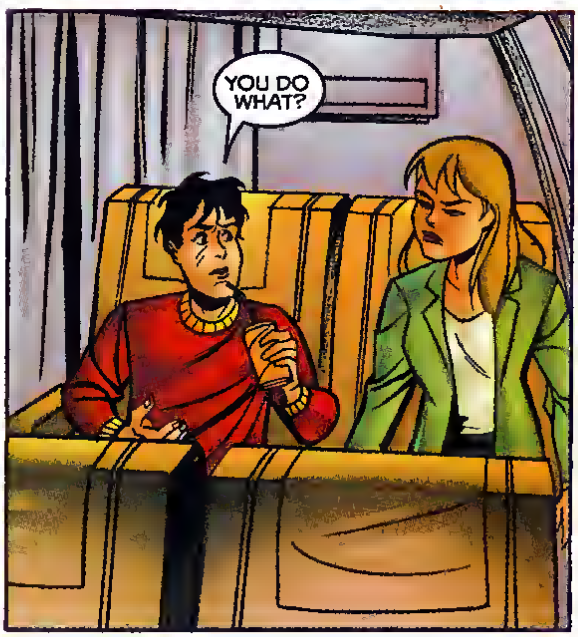

DAILY BUGLE
NEW YORK'S FINEST DAILY NEWSPAPER
AN ACT OF WAR
THE BLACK PANTHER DEMANDS SANCTIONS AGAINST U.S.
An international crisis erupted today when King T'Challa, leader of the historical monarchy of Wakanda, accused the U.S. intelligence community of overthrowing his government. Citing statements offered by "cooperating witnesses," whom sources have identified as D2 [illegible] Gapoti, rumored to be a high official in the Russian Mafia, and Jack Taylor, CEO of
I MEAN, NICK, THERE ARE PRACTICAL LIMITS TO WHAT I CAN TELL A HEAD OF STATE TO DO OR NOT TO DO --

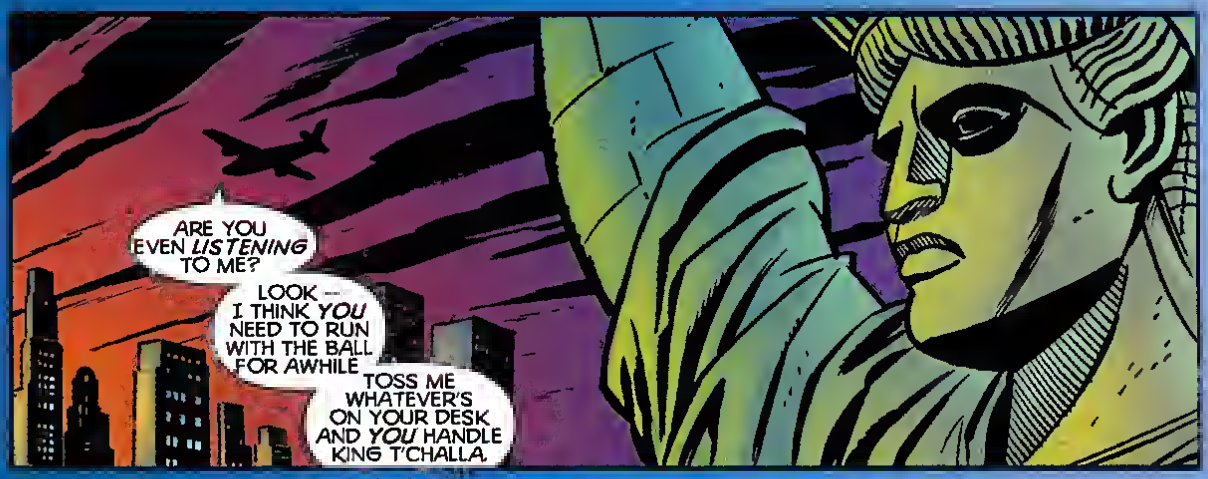

-- MY JOB BEING MAINLY ABOUT CARRYING THE GUY'S LUGGAGE AND GETTING HIM TICKETS TO RENT.
GIVING ME A DAY TO "REEL HIM IN" ?! GEEZ, NIKKI --

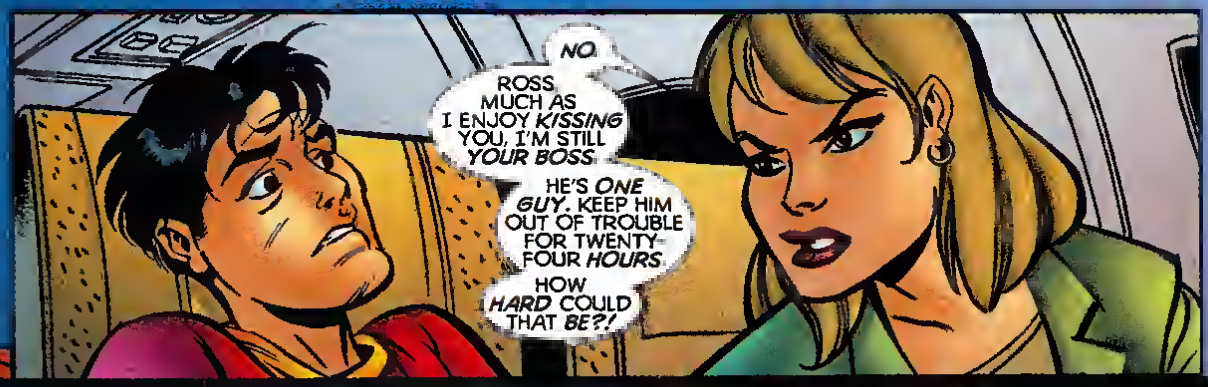

-- WHAT DOES HE WANT FROM ME --?!


T'CHALLA -- WHAT DO YOU WANT FROM ME?!
NICOLE... IT IS NOT OUR TIME.
FIRST IN MY LIFE IS TO DEFEND AND SERVE THE WAKANDANS FOR ME TO TRULY LEAD, I MUST BE MORE THAN KING --
-- I MUST BE CHIEFTAIN OF THE PANTHER CLAN. MY STUDIES HERE ARE PART OF THAT PILGRIMAGE


AND ME? WAS I PART OF THE JOURNEY?
OF COURSE. BUT THE JOURNEY CONTINUES.
IF I REST... IF I STRAY... MY PEOPLE PERISH. YOU MUST UNDERSTAND THAT
--
-- I DO.


YOU DO WHAT?





LESS THAN AN HOUR LATER



SEVENTEEN HOURS AFTER THAT



WHITE GUYS


HAVE YOU DECLARED *WAR* ON THE UNITED STATES?
I HAVE NOT.
DO YOUR CHARGES AGAINST THE U.S. PLACE YOUR *DIPLOMATIC IMMUNITY* IN JEOPARDY?
SUCH MATTERS ARE FOR *LEGAL AUTHORITIES*.
IS IT TRUE YOU'VE KIDNAPPED A RUSSIAN MOBSTER AND A U.S. INTELLIGENCE AGENT --?
CNN
DAILY BUGLE
PANTHER: ROWL IT'S WAR!
SO, YOUR WHISKAS-NESS --
-- HOW'D IT *GO* IN THERE?
IT WENT AS EXPECTED, SERGEANT TORK.
THANK YOU FOR GUARDING OUR VEHICLE.
DE NADA.
BUT YOU SHOULD KNOW, A BUNCHA *WHITE GUYS* ARE WAITING FOR YOU ROUND THE CORNER
I CAN *HELP* YOU WITH TWO -- MAYBE *THREE* OF 'EM...

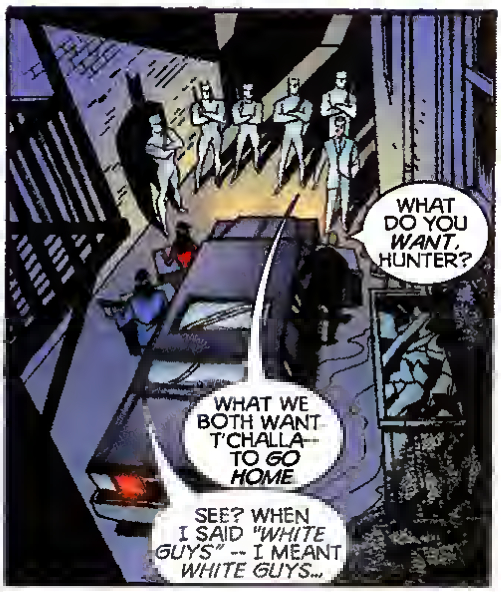

...WHICH THE WAKANDAN KING HAS CHARACTERIZED AS "AN ACT OF WAR." COULD THIS BE AN UNOFFICIAL DECLARATION...
WELL, RAKEISHA --
-- IT'S BEGUN.
NO STOPPING IT NOW, IS THERE?
WOULDN'T KNOW MA'AM.
IGNORE ME, RAKEISHA. I'M JUST BABBLING --
...JUST A LITTLE... TIRED...

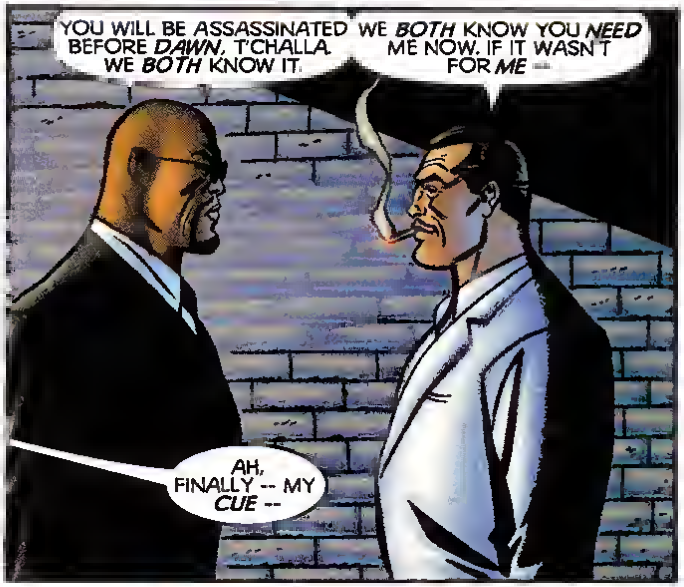

WHAT DO YOU SEE---?
How would I know, fool?!
Which one of us is the hand puppet?!
I'VE BEGUN TO WONDER MYSELF.
NOT IN THE MOOD ACHEBE
THOUGH WE JOINTLY GOVERN WAKANDA I'M THE ONLY ONE DOING ANY REAL WORK.
YES... DAKI AND I HAVE GIVEN THAT A LOT OF THOUGHT RRRAMONDA.
...AND WE HAVE DECIDED A CHANGE OF PLAN IS IN ORDER.
WHUMP
...ACCESS CODES... ACCESS CODES...
You know... hit her hard.
I DIDN'T HIT HER YOU FOOL -- YOU DID.
You did.
DID NOT.
Did too.

THE HOCKEY PUCK














SNIPERS--!
BRAAAATATATATATATAT
<DRIVE, BELOVED.>*
T'CHALLA -- YOU CAN'T STAY--!
<GET HER TO SAFETY.>
NO -- I THINK--?!
TAKE COVER!
BOOM BOOM
WHO THE BLAZES ARE THOSE GUYS?!
BRAAAATATATATATATAT
*From Hausa -- J&J
MY KING --
THIS IS ONLY THE BEGINNING.
COMMAND ME.




Our plane had just gotten in, and I'd double-timed it to the U.N.
I felt like I'd walked in on the MIDDLE of a Van Damme flick.
--?!?
WHAT'D I MISS?! WHAT'D I MISS--?!
SHADDUP, YOU LITTLE WEASEL, AND GET IN HERE!!
--?! WHY?!
THAT'S WHY!
THE TUNNEL THE TUNNEL THE TUNNEL THE TUNNEL THE TUNNEL THE TUNNEL
LOAD THIS
--?! ARE YOU KIDDING ME--?!
BRAAAATATATATATAT
BRAAAATATATATATATAT
Yup.
Things were going well.
SKKREEEEECHH


PROWLERS
RA-MONNN-DA...
RA-MONNN-DA...
RAMONDA!
HEY! WAKE UP!
She's dead.
NO, SHE ISN'T!
Is too.
IS NOT.
Well, we'll just agree to disagree. We have the codes now.
YES... THE CODES...
The... coooodes...
Now, then... a few rewrites of the programming...
...and our new
H39TPZ89Q

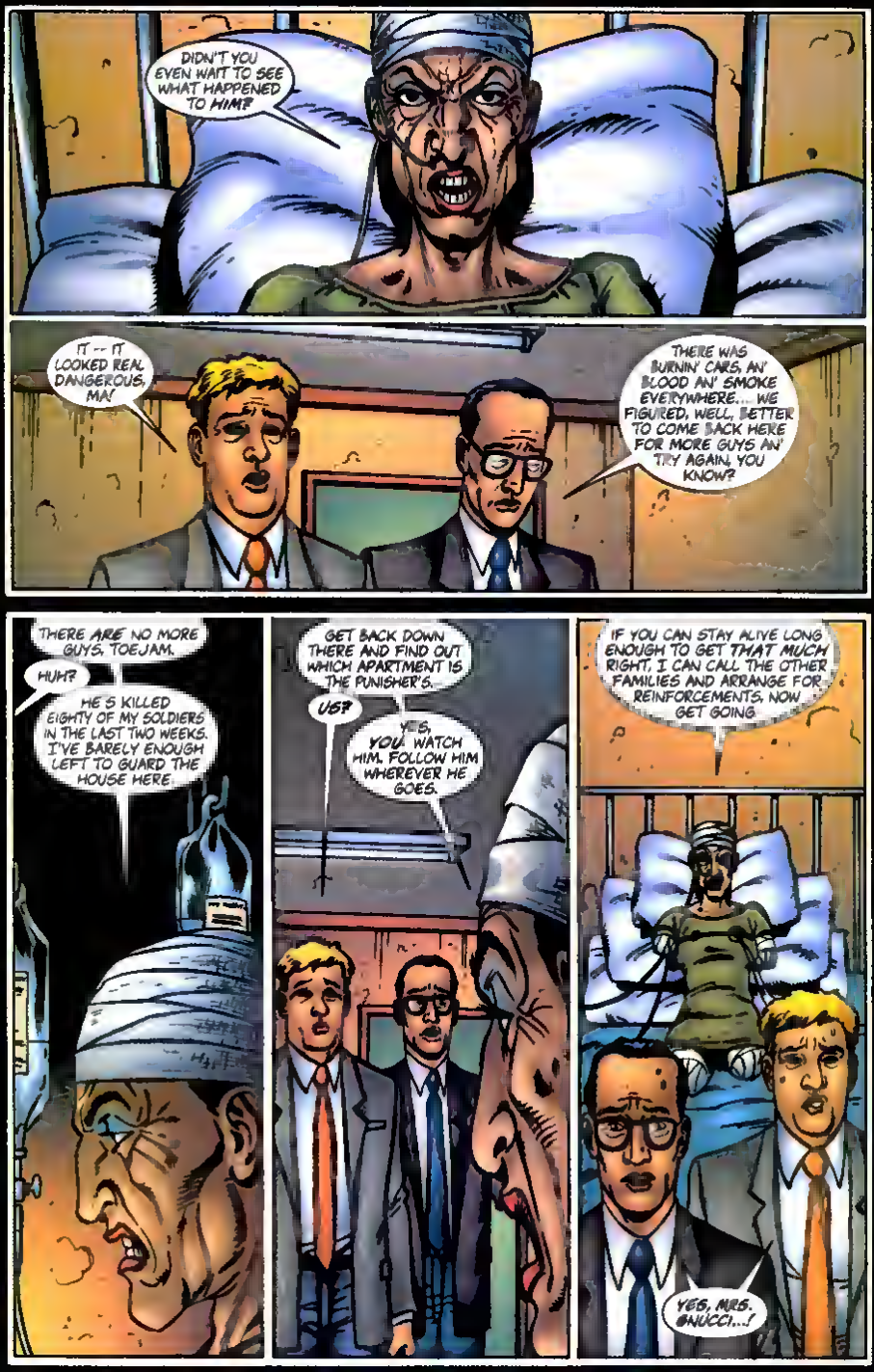

"...should be on their way!"
NEXT:
LOTS AND LOTS OF SHOOTING. ENEMY OF THE STATE CONTINUES...


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HMMM
SHOULD BE DEAD.
MIGHT GET THERE YET BEEN SHOT A BUNCH OF TIMES.
COPS'LL BE HERE ANY MINUTE.
IF I'M NOT DEAD I MIGHT AS WELL GET MOVING.
ALL I HAVE TO DO IS STAND UP, WALK A BLOCK AND A HALF WITH SIX BULLETS IN MY CHEST, HOPE I DON'T PASS OUT, AND I'M HOME.
AFTER ALL, HOW HARD CAN THAT BE?
HNNGH


WHY ELSE WOULD I CALL YOU, ANYWAY? YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE ON THE DAMN TASKFORCE!
I ONLY ASKED...!
ANOTHER ONE OF YOUR FANS, MM?
I TOLD YOU WE SHOULD HAVE FOLLOWED THESE GUYS. THEY'D'VE LED US RIGHT TO THE PUNISHER.
YOU'D'VE LIKED TO HAVE BEEN HERE FOR THIS, WOULD YOU?
POINT.
I KEEP TELLING YOU WE'LL GET HIM WHEN HE HITS MA GNUCCI
OUR CAPTAIN CALLED. WANTS YOU TO CHECK OUT THESE KILLINGS UPTOWN, WITH THE CROSSES ON THE HEADS.
OH. THAT'S NOT THE PUNISHER'S M.O AT ALL...!
THIS VIGILANTE STUFF'S GETTING PRETTY HIGH PROFILE. THIS WAY IT LOOKS LIKE THE DEPARTMENT'S DOING SOMETHING
KELLY'S HEROES.


BATTING A THOUSAND HERE.
ALL I HAVE TO DO IS WALK TO MY APARTMENT. FIND THE KEY. FIT IT IN THE LOCK. AND CLOSE THE DOOR BEHIND ME WITHOUT WAKING ANY OF MY FREAKSHOW NEIGHBORS.
AFTER ALL --
HOW HARD CAN THAT BE?


DIDN'T YOU EVEN WAIT TO SEE WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM?
IT -- IT LOOKED REAL DANGEROUS, MA!
THERE WAS BURNIN' CARS, AN' BLOOD AN' SMOKE EVERYWHERE.... WE FIGURED, WELL, BETTER TO COME BACK HERE FOR MORE GUYS AN' TRY AGAIN, YOU KNOW?
THERE ARE NO MORE GUYS, TOEJAM.
HUH?
HE'S KILLED EIGHTY OF MY SOLDIERS IN THE LAST TWO WEEKS. I'VE BARELY ENOUGH LEFT TO GUARD THE HOUSE HERE.
GET BACK DOWN THERE AND FIND OUT WHICH APARTMENT IS THE PUNISHER'S.
USA
YES, YOU. WATCH HIM. FOLLOW HIM WHEREVER HE GOES.
IF YOU CAN STAY ALIVE LONG ENOUGH TO GET THAT MUCH RIGHT, I CAN CALL THE OTHER FAMILIES AND ARRANGE FOR REINFORCEMENTS. NOW GET GOING.
YES, MRS. GNUCCI...!


A TRIUMPH.
NOW ALL I HAVE TO DO...
IS DIG THESE BULLETS OUT OF MYSELF...
NOT BLEED TO DEATH...
SEW UP THE HOLES...
AND HEAL.
AFTER ALL
HOW
HARD
CAN
THAT
BE

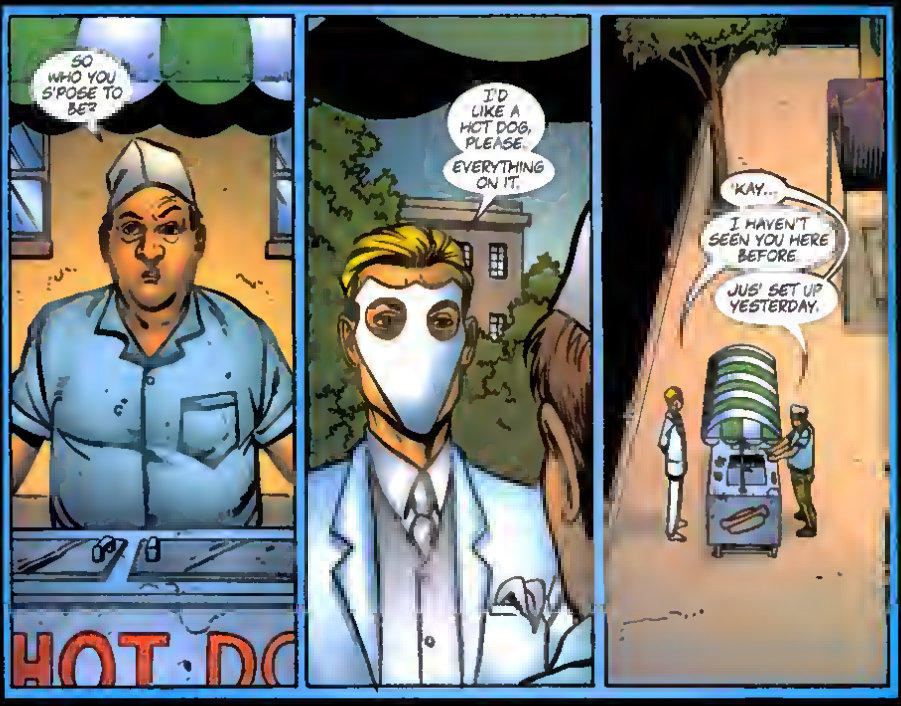

THE SHOOTIST.
NOT NOW, SOAP.
AH, OFFICERS !
DETECTIVE SOAP AND LIEUTENANT VON RICHTHOFEN. FATHER REDONDO. WE SPOKE ON THE PHONE.
OF COURSE. IT'S IN CONNECTION WITH THESE TERRIBLE MURDERS, IS THAT RIGHT?
YES. YOU SEE, THE ONE THING THE VICTIMS HAD IN COMMON IS THAT ALL FOUR APPARENTLY ATTENDED YOUR CHURCH, FATHER
WHICH IS QUITE A STRANGE THING, WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT IT....
THAT IS A STRANGE THING DETECTIVE.
BUT I SOON ENDED UP UPON THE OLD MAIN DRAG

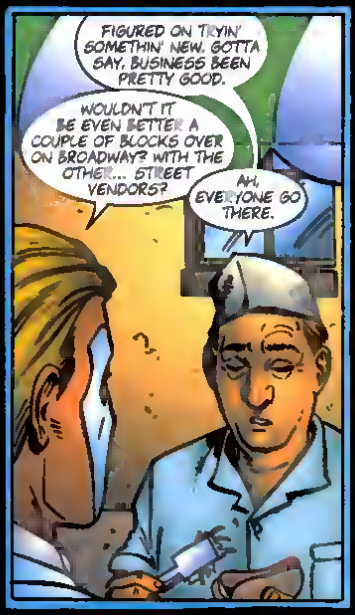

HOW'S THAT SPILT WINE COMING, MRS. PEARSE?
WHAT?
I SAID HOW'S THAT SPILT WINE --
WHAT?!
YEH LL HAVE TO SPEAK UP, FATHER. ME HEARIN'S NOT WHAT IT WAS, YEH KNOW?
WHAT A DEAR OLD SOUL.
ANYWAY. YES, I KNEW ALL FIVE MEN. I TOOK THEIR CONFESSIONS REGULARLY.
FOUR MEN.
SORRY, DID I SAY FIVE?
THEY WENT TO CONFESSION? KILLERS AND DRUG DEALERS?
OH, YES. OBVIOUSLY I CAN'T DIVULGE WHAT WE TALKED ABOUT -- THE SEAL OF THE CONFESSIONAL, YOU UNDERSTAND. BUT YES, THE UNLIKELIEST PEOPLE COME SEEKING ABSOLUTION...
DIDN'T DO THEM MUCH GOOD, DID IT?
WELL... THAT'S THE PROBLEM WITH GOD'S FORGIVENESS, LIEUTENANT.
HE'S ONLY GOT SO MUCH OF IT TO GO AROUND.
I'LL SHOW YOU OUT...


MR. SMITH?


MR. SMITH?
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT, MR. SMITH?
9MM

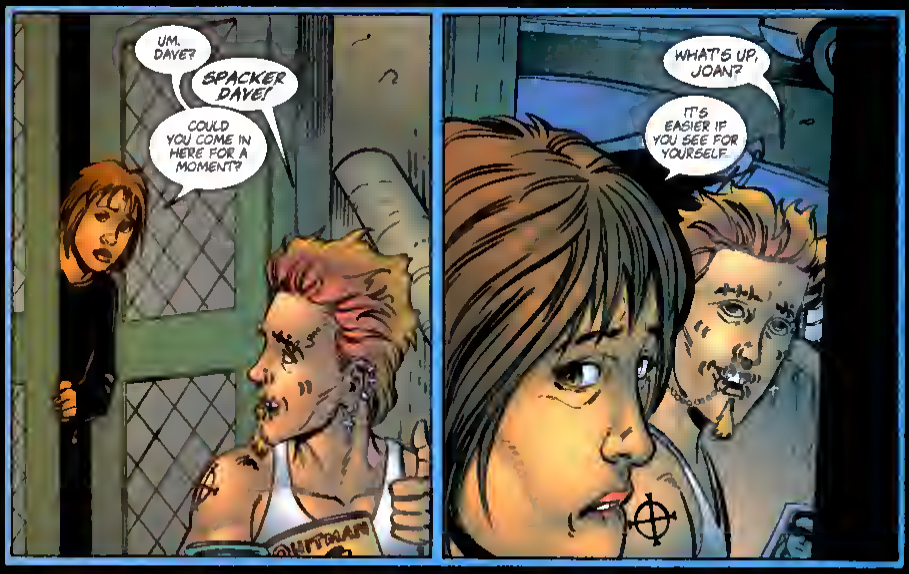

MR... SMITH...?


SO, WHO YOU S'POSE TO BE?
HOT DO
I'D LIKE A HOT DOG, PLEASE.
EVERYTHING ON IT.
'KAY...
I HAVEN'T SEEN YOU HERE BEFORE.
JUS' SET UP YESTERDAY.

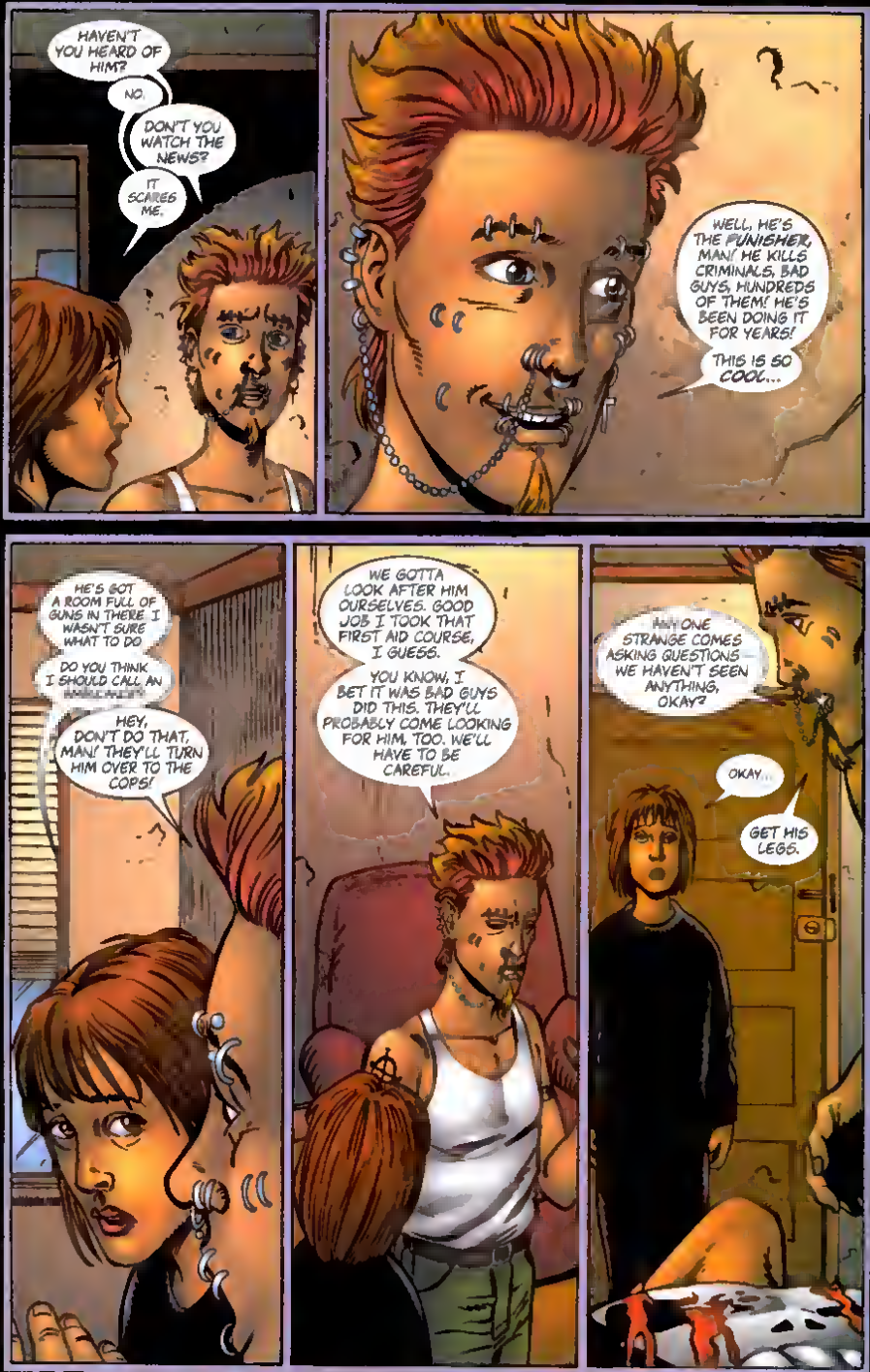

FIGURED ON TRYIN' SOMETHIN' NEW. GOTTA SAY, BUSINESS BEEN PRETTY GOOD.
WOULDN'T IT BE EVEN BETTER A COUPLE OF BLOCKS OVER ON BROADWAY? WITH THE OTHER... STREET VENDORS?
AH, EVERYONE GO THERE.

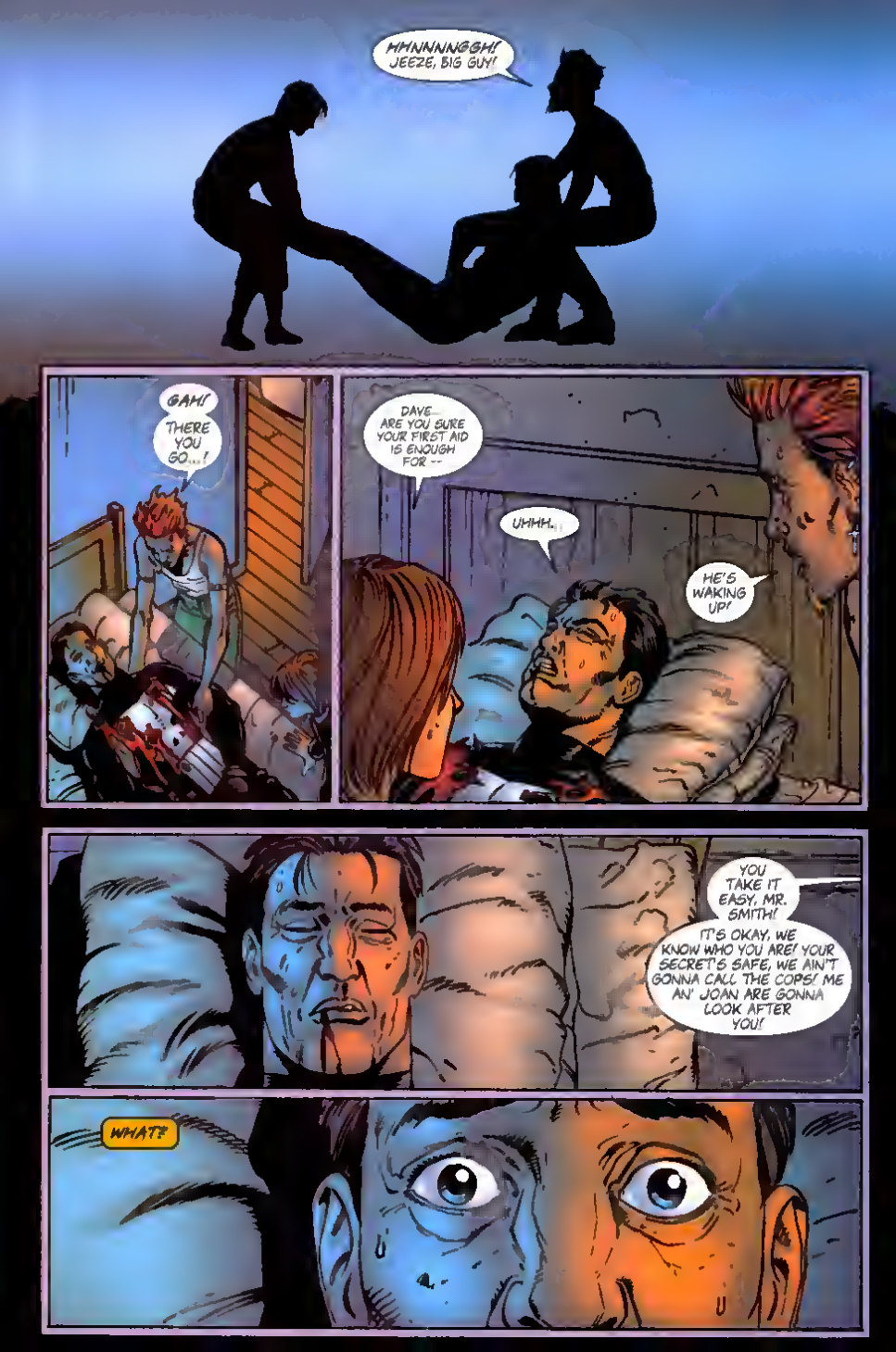

YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND.
THIS IS A NICE NEIGHBORHOOD.


YEAH, IT'S NICE...
WE DON'T WANT PEOPLE SELLING HOT DOGS HERE. WE DON'T WANT THE KIND OF PEOPLE WHO LIKE HOT DOGS HERE
WE DON'T WANT PEOPLE WITH FRISBEES, AND BASKETBALLS, AND MALT LIQUOR, AND NARCOTICS..
HOLY JEEZ!
BECAUSE WE PAID A LOT OF MONEY TO LIVE HERE AND WE DON'T WANT RIFF-RAFF LOWERING THE TONE
GO
AIIIEEEEEE!
FILTH.


UM. DAVE?
SPACKER DAVE!
COULD YOU COME IN HERE FOR A MOMENT?
HITMAN
WHAT'S UP, JOAN?
IT'S EASIER IF YOU SEE FOR YOURSELF.


HE JUST FELL OVER
MR. SMITH IS THE PUNISHER! WHAT ARE THE CHANCES OF THAT, HUH?
YOU KNOW, I KIND OF SUSPECTED HIS NAME WASN'T REALLY SMITH...
UM... THE PUNISHER?

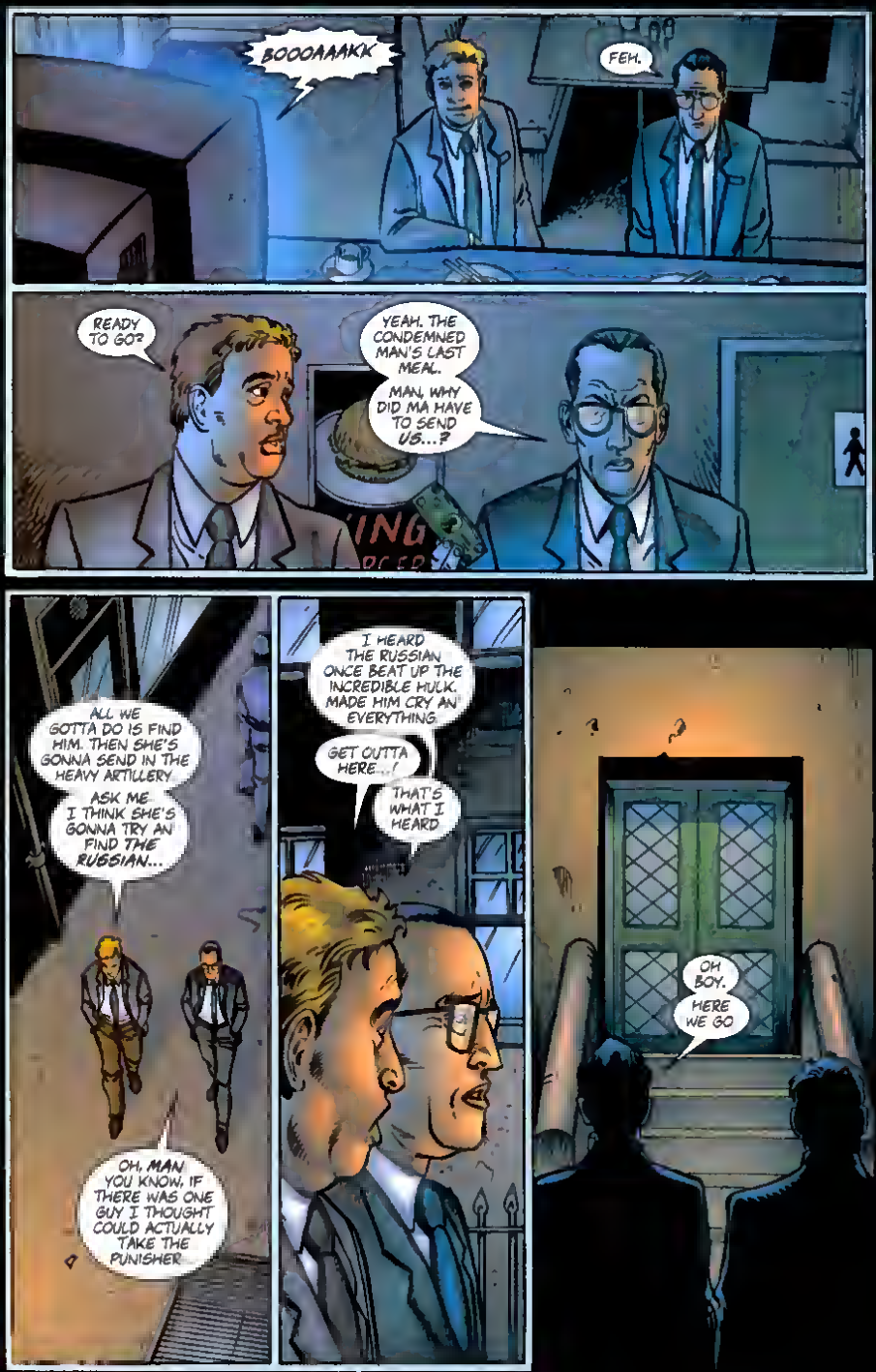

HAVEN'T YOU HEARD OF HIM?
NO.
DON'T YOU WATCH THE NEWS?
IT SCARES ME.
WELL, HE'S THE PUNISHER, MAN! HE KILLS CRIMINALS, BAD GUYS, HUNDREDS OF THEM! HE'S BEEN DOING IT FOR YEARS!
THIS IS SO COOL...
HE'S GOT A ROOM FULL OF GUNS IN THERE. I WASN'T SURE WHAT TO DO
DO YOU THINK I SHOULD CALL AN AMBULANCE?
HEY, DON'T DO THAT, MAN! THEY'LL TURN HIM OVER TO THE COPS!
WE GOTTA LOOK AFTER HIM OURSELVES. GOOD JOB I TOOK THAT FIRST AID COURSE, I GUESS.
YOU KNOW, I BET IT WAS BAD GUYS DID THIS. THEY'LL PROBABLY COME LOOKING FOR HIM, TOO. WE'LL HAVE TO BE CAREFUL..
ANYONE STRANGE COMES ASKING QUESTIONS WE HAVEN'T SEEN ANYTHING, OKAY?
OKAY...
GET HIS LEGS.

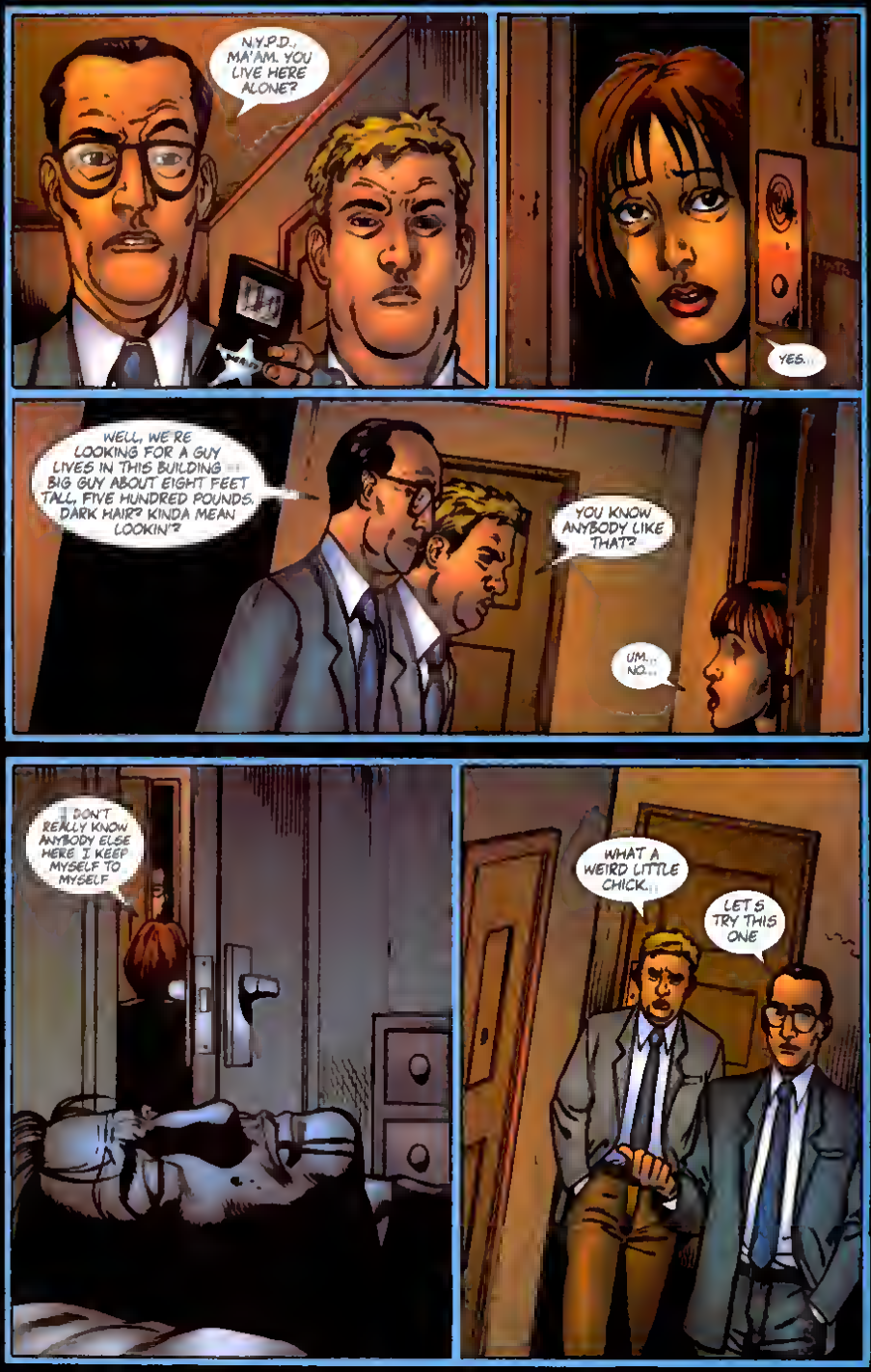

MMNNNGGH!
JEEZE, BIG GUY!
GAH!
THERE YOU GO...!
DAVE... ARE YOU SURE YOUR FIRST AID IS ENOUGH FOR --
UHHH...
HE'S WAKING UP!
YOU TAKE IT EASY, MR. SMITH!
IT'S OKAY, WE KNOW WHO YOU ARE! YOUR SECRET'S SAFE, WE AIN'T GONNA CALL THE COPS! ME AN' JOAN ARE GONNA LOOK AFTER YOU!
WHAT?


I'M HERE WITH ROBERT LEONARD, CHAIRMAN OF THE WALL STREET INVESTORS ASSOCIATION AND CO-OWNER OF METROPOLITAN TRADING INCORPORATED
THANKS FOR JOINING US, ROBERT.
MR. LEONARD.
MR. LEONARD, WHAT IS YOUR REACTION TO THE MYSTERIOUS FIGURE KNOWN AS MR. PAYBACK?
HE'S A LUNATIC AND A TERRORIST HE'S MURDERED A NUMBER OF VERY FINE MEMBERS OF THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY, AND HIS ACCUSATIONS OF CORPORATE MISDEEDS ARE THE WORST KIND OF SPURIOUS COMMUNIST PROPAGANDA
BUT A LOT OF PEOPLE, WHILE CERTAINLY NOT CONDONING MR. PAYBACK'S ACTIONS, HAVE EXPRESSED SYMPATHY WITH HIS CRITICISM OF BIG BUSINESS' INDIFFERENCE TO PUBLIC FEELING...
YES, WELL THEY'RE WRONG AREN'T THEY? WE'RE OBVIOUSLY TALKING ABOUT THE VIEWS OF A LOT OF BLEEDING HEART LIBERALS WHO KNOW NEXT TO NOTHING ABOUT FREE MARKET ECONOMY
BLAM


I'D LIKE TO BE INTERVIEWED NOW, PLEASE.
HE'S... HE'S...
HE'S DEAD. YES, I DON'T THINK MY VIEWS HAVE BEEN REPORTED PARTICULARLY RATIONALLY. I'D LIKE TO REDRESS THE BALANCE.
UH... YOU...
NEVER MIND. I'LL DO IT MYSELF...
PEOPLE OF NEW YORK CITY. PEOPLE OF THE UNITED STATES. I AM MR. PAYBACK.
I AM THE VENGEANCE OF THE COMMON MAN.
FOR TOO LONG, BROTHERS AND SISTERS, WE HAVE LET THESE BLOATED SWINE HOLD SWAY. THEY BUY OUR SO-CALLED REPRESENTATIVES THEY BLIND US WITH MEANINGLESS STATISTICS, BUZZ-WORDS SCAREMONGERING SLOGANS
WHEN WE DO STAND UP FOR OUR RIGHTS, THEY FIRE US ON THE SPOT AND RELOCATE TO COUNTRIES WHERE PEOPLE HAVE NO RIGHTS AT ALL


I AM CALLED A CRIMINAL -- YET ALL I DO IS EXECUTE SCUM WHO DRINK THE BLOOD OF MILLIONS.
WHO BUY PRODUCE FROM THIRD WORLD FARMS WHERE PESTICIDES HAVE DEBILITATED HUNDREDS, AND WARPED THEIR UNBORN CHILDREN IN THE WOMB. WHO SELL GUNS TO TYRANTS THE WORLD OVER, RUNNING AMERICAN BUSINESS LIKE A GIANT DEATH MACHINE.
WHO DEFEND THEMSELVES BY SCREAMING COMMUNIST -- WHEN COMMUNISM IS A FARCE. AN EMPTY THREAT! LONG DEAD AND IN ITS GRAVE.
NO MORE. MY FRIENDS. IT IS TIME TO STRIKE BACK AGAINST THESE CON-MEN. IT IS TIME FOR PAYBACK.
ANYWAY, THAT'S THE POLICE. I HAVE TO GO.
UH... YES... OH LORD, HE'S REALLY DEAD...
HIS- HIS BRAINS ARE COMING OUT HIS MOUTH --!
FIVE BUCKS SAYS SHE PUKES.
ON AIR? COME ON. THESE PEOPLE ARE PROFESSIONALS...


BOOOAAAKK
FEH.
READY TO GO?
YEAH. THE CONDEMNED MAN'S LAST MEAL.
MAN, WHY DID MA HAVE TO SEND US...?
ALL WE GOTTA DO IS FIND HIM. THEN SHE'S GONNA SEND IN THE HEAVY ARTILLERY
ASK ME. I THINK SHE'S GONNA TRY AN FIND THE RUSSIAN...
OH, MAN. YOU KNOW, IF THERE WAS ONE GUY I THOUGHT COULD ACTUALLY TAKE THE PUNISHER
I HEARD THE RUSSIAN ONCE BEAT UP THE INCREDIBLE HULK. MADE HIM CRY AN EVERYTHING.
GET OUTTA HERE...!
THAT'S WHAT I HEARD
OH BOY. HERE WE GO


N.Y.P.D., MA'AM. YOU LIVE HERE ALONE?
YES...
WELL, WE'RE LOOKING FOR A GUY LIVES IN THIS BUILDING BIG GUY ABOUT EIGHT FEET TALL, FIVE HUNDRED POUNDS, DARK HAIR? KINDA MEAN LOOKIN'?
YOU KNOW ANYBODY LIKE THAT?
UM... NO...
I DON'T REALLY KNOW ANYBODY ELSE HERE. I KEEP MYSELF TO MYSELF.
WHAT A WEIRD LITTLE CHICK...
LET'S TRY THIS ONE


N.Y.P.D., OPEN UP!
OH NO!
IT'S THEM! IT HAS TO BE!
GOTTA BE COOL, GOTTA BE COOL, GOTTA BE COOL, GOTTA BE COOL --
WE --
AAAAH! YOU'RE NOT COPS! I KNOW WHO YOU ARE! YOU'RE HERE FOR HIM, BUT, BUT I'M NOT SAYING ANYTHING! I'M NOT BETRAYING THE PUNISHER TO PUNKS LIKE YOU!
SO YOU CAN GET LOST, YOU HEAR?!


REALLY
TO BE CONTINUED


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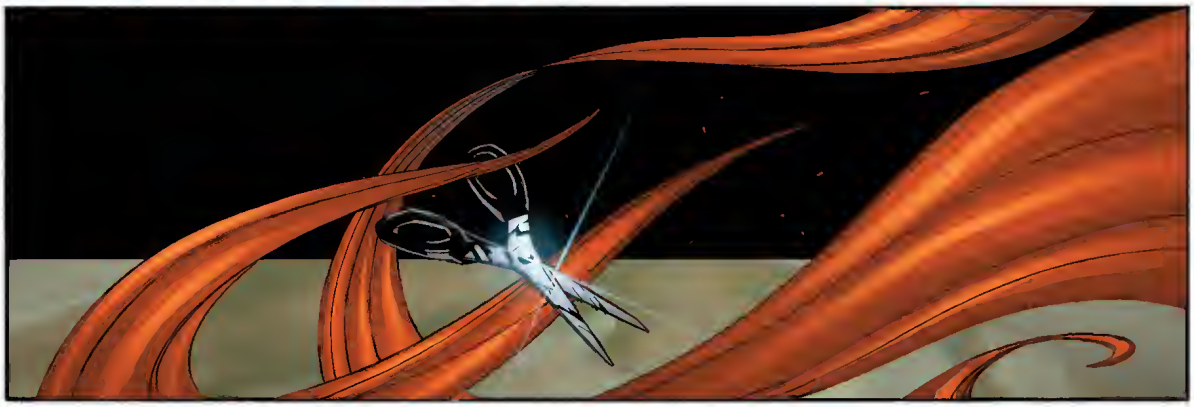


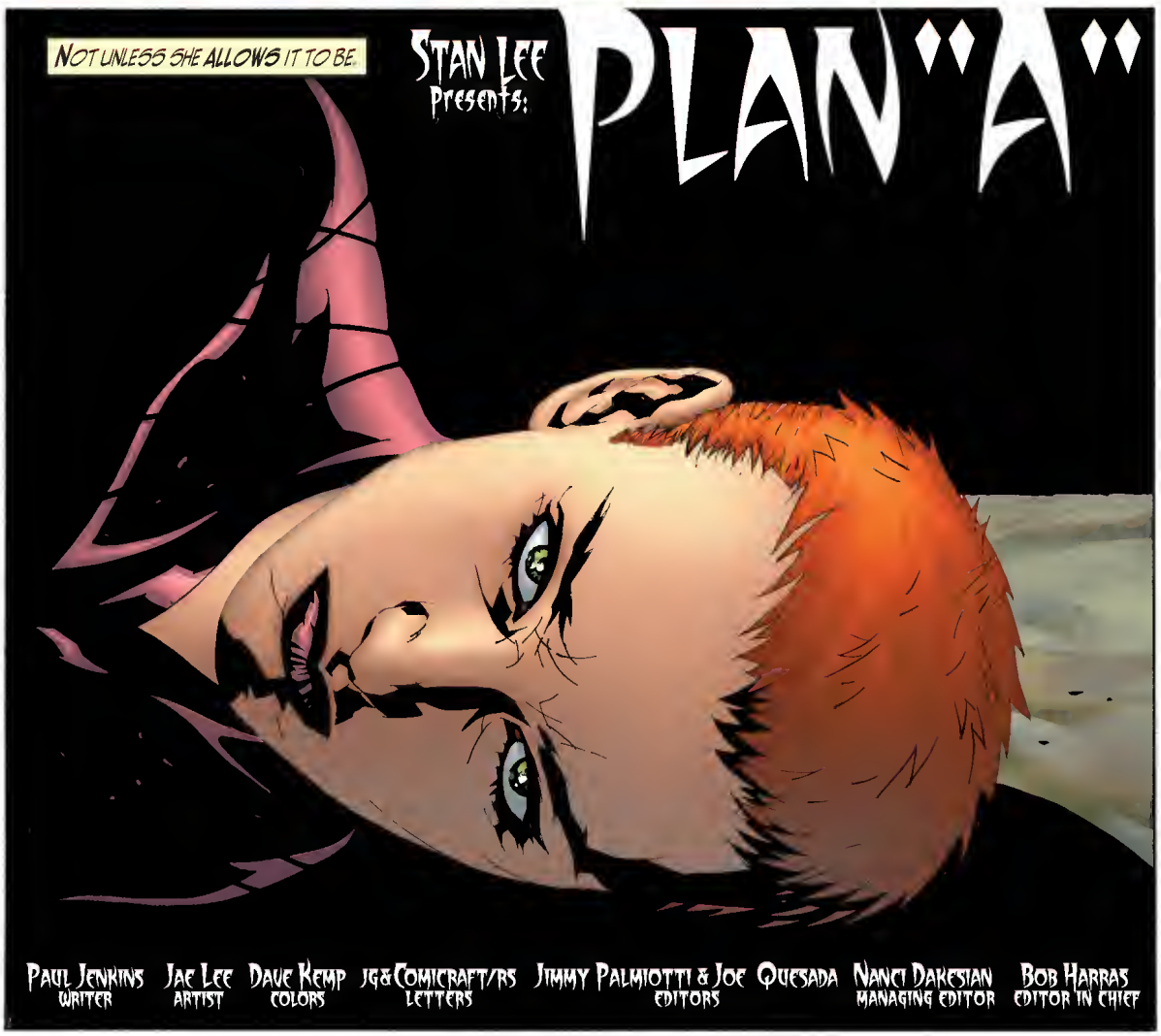


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SHE LIES IN THE DARK, ALONE AND DEFILED... TRYING TO MAKE SENSE OF WHAT HE'S DONE TO HER.
BY LOSING HER HAIR SHE'S LOST EVERYTHING: HER DIGNITY... HER TERRIGENESIS, BY WHICH SHE IS DEFINED.
HER HAIR... HER IDENTITY: THAT BRILLIANT RED EMBLEM OF HER ROLE AT BLACK BOLT'S SIDE AS QUEEN OF ATTILAN.
HER HAIR... HER BEAUTIFUL POWER: THAT SHINING, LUSTROUS WEAPON -- COMMANDED BY THE SHEER FORCE OF HER WILL.
HER HAIR... THAT EXTENSION OF HER TRANSMUTED GENETIC CODE. A DEEP FLASH OF COLOR, RAZOR SHARP...


HER HAIR... SO STRONG THAT IT HAS THE STRENGTH OF DIAMOND FILAMENT. IT CANNOT BE SEVERED.



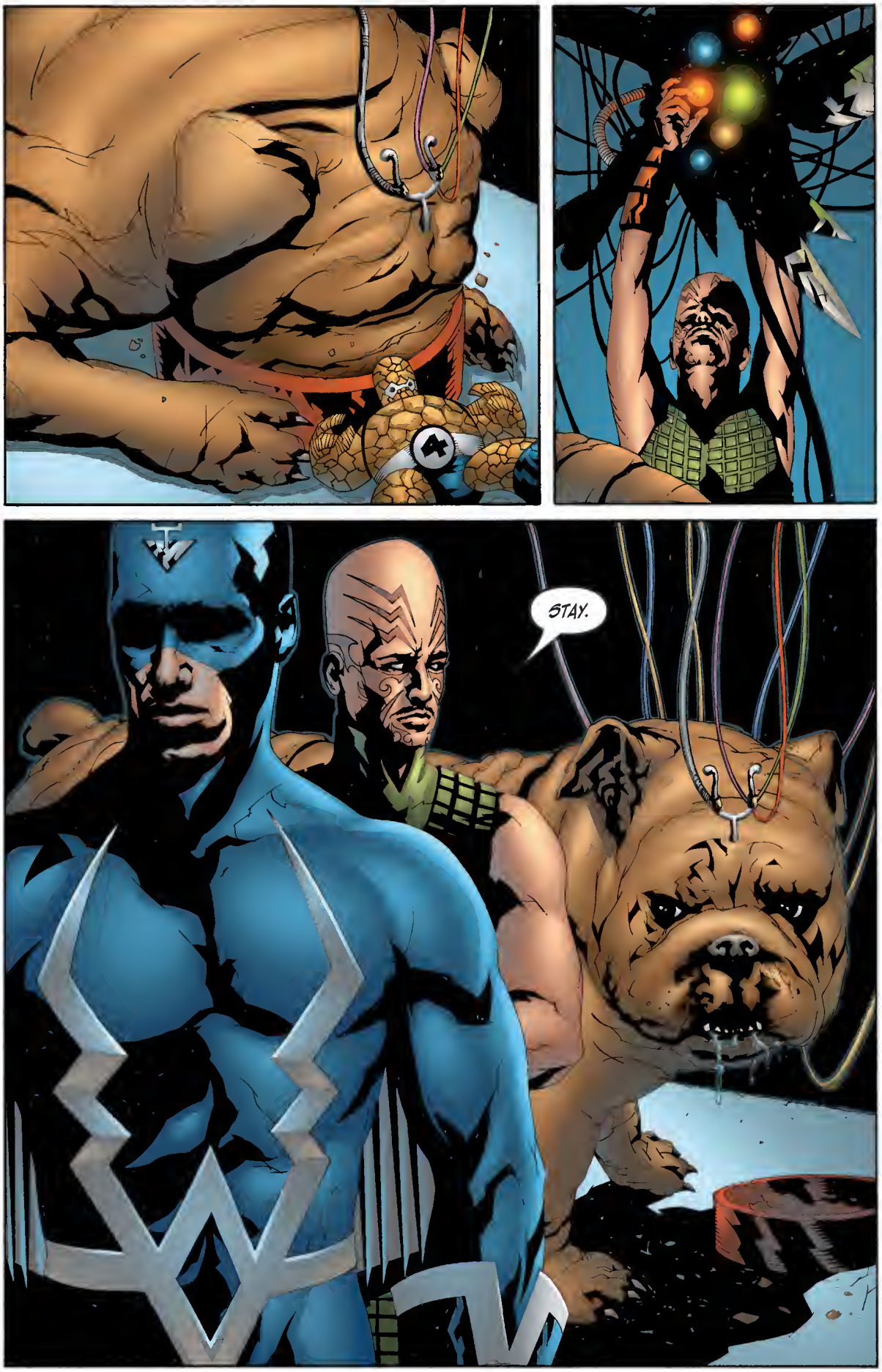

NOT UNLESS SHE ALLOWS IT TO BE.
STAN LEE PRESENTS:
PLAN "A"
PAUL JENKINS WRITER
JAE LEE ARTIST
DAVE KEMP COLORS
JG & COMICRAFT/RS LETTERS
JIMMY PALMIOTTI & JOE QUESADA EDITORS
NANCI DARESIAN MANAGING EDITOR
BOB HARRAS EDITOR IN CHIEF

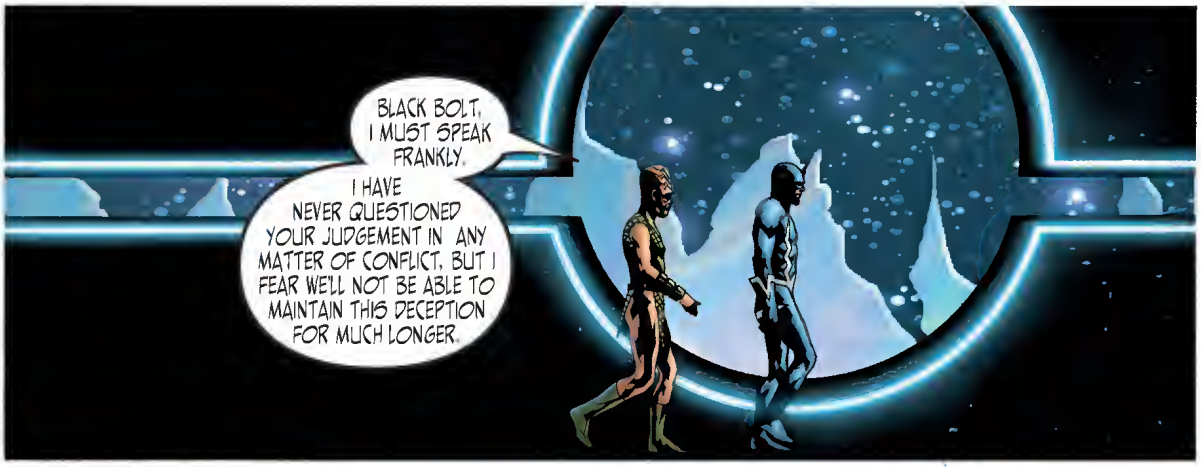









STAY.


BLACK BOLT, I MUST SPEAK FRANKLY.
I HAVE NEVER QUESTIONED YOUR JUDGEMENT IN ANY MATTER OF CONFLICT, BUT I FEAR WE'LL NOT BE ABLE TO MAINTAIN THIS DECEPTION FOR MUCH LONGER.


CRYSTAL, TRITON... GORGON ESPECIALLY -- THEY ARE YOUR TRUSTED AND LOYAL SERVANTS. BUT NATURALLY, THEY ARE LED TO QUESTION YOUR JUDGEMENT IN THIS MATTER.
THEY CANNOT POSSIBLY BE EXPECTED TO UNDERSTAND YOUR MOTIVES AS OUR CITY OF ATTILAN FALLS TO THE HUMAN INVADERS. I FEAR THEY'LL NOT ALLOW THAT TO HAPPEN.

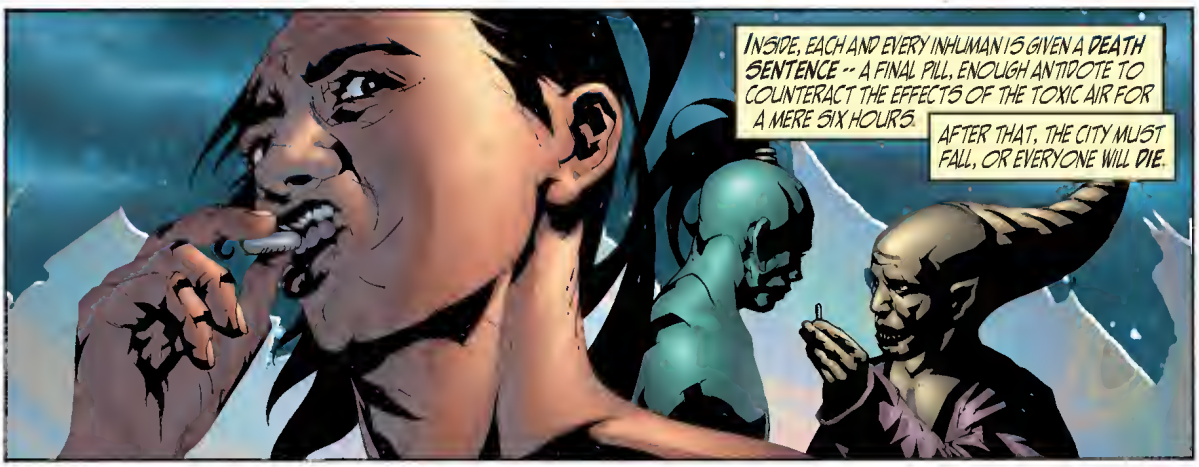

SURELY, THE TIME HAS COME FOR US TO TELL THEM THE TRUTH -- ?



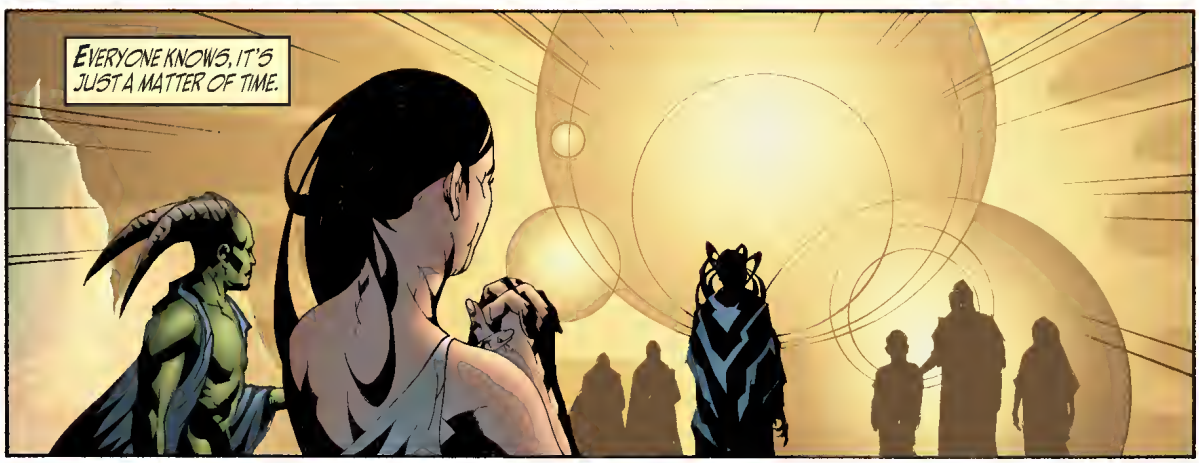

Oh, KING BLACK BOLT... MY LORD KARNAK... I'M SO SORRY FOR WHAT I'VE DONE. IF I'M...
IF I'M TO BE CONVICTED OF TREASON, I ASK ONLY THAT MY FAMILY'S GENETIC CACHE BE HELD UNACCOUNTABLE. THEY'VE WORKED SO HARD... I THINK THIS WOULD DESTROY THEM.
BUT YOU HAVE TO UNDERSTAND... PRINCE MAXIMUS WAS CONTROLLING MY ACTIONS. I SWEAR IT.
HE SOMEHOW TOOK MY TRUE TERRIGENESIS AWAY FROM ME, MADE ME ASSUME THE FORM OF AN ALPHA PRIMITIVE.
"HE... HE MADE ME DO THINGS. I GAVE PLANS FOR THE CITY DEFENSES TO A HUMAN NAMED STALYENKO -- THE INVADERS' COMMANDER.
"THEY WERE MAKING A DEVICE OF SOME KIND, DESIGNED TO DESTROY THE CITY'S INNER BARRIER --"
BE ASSURED, DEWOZ, YOUR KING AND I HOLD YOU UNACCOUNTABLE FOR YOUR ACTIONS WHILE UNDER MAXIMUS' INFLUENCE. IN FACT, WE HOLD YOU IN THE HIGHEST REGARD.
BUT YOUR SUDDEN ARRIVAL HERE HAS... COMPLICATED MATTERS.


YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND. THE DEVICE... THEY SMUGGLED IT INTO THE CITY DISGUISED AS A STATUE -- IT'S DESTROYING THE NEGATIVE SPACE BARRIER --
WE KNOW.
WE KNOW A GREAT DEAL MORE THAN YOU CAN POSSIBLY IMAGINE. THAT IS WHY I MUST NOW ASK FOR YOUR TRUST. YOU MUST REMAIN ISOLATED HERE FOR A BRIEF TIME --
B-BUT MY FAMILY... IF I'VE DONE NOTHING WRONG... WHY?
YOUNG DEWOZ... I HAVE A MOMENTOUS SECRET TO IMPART --

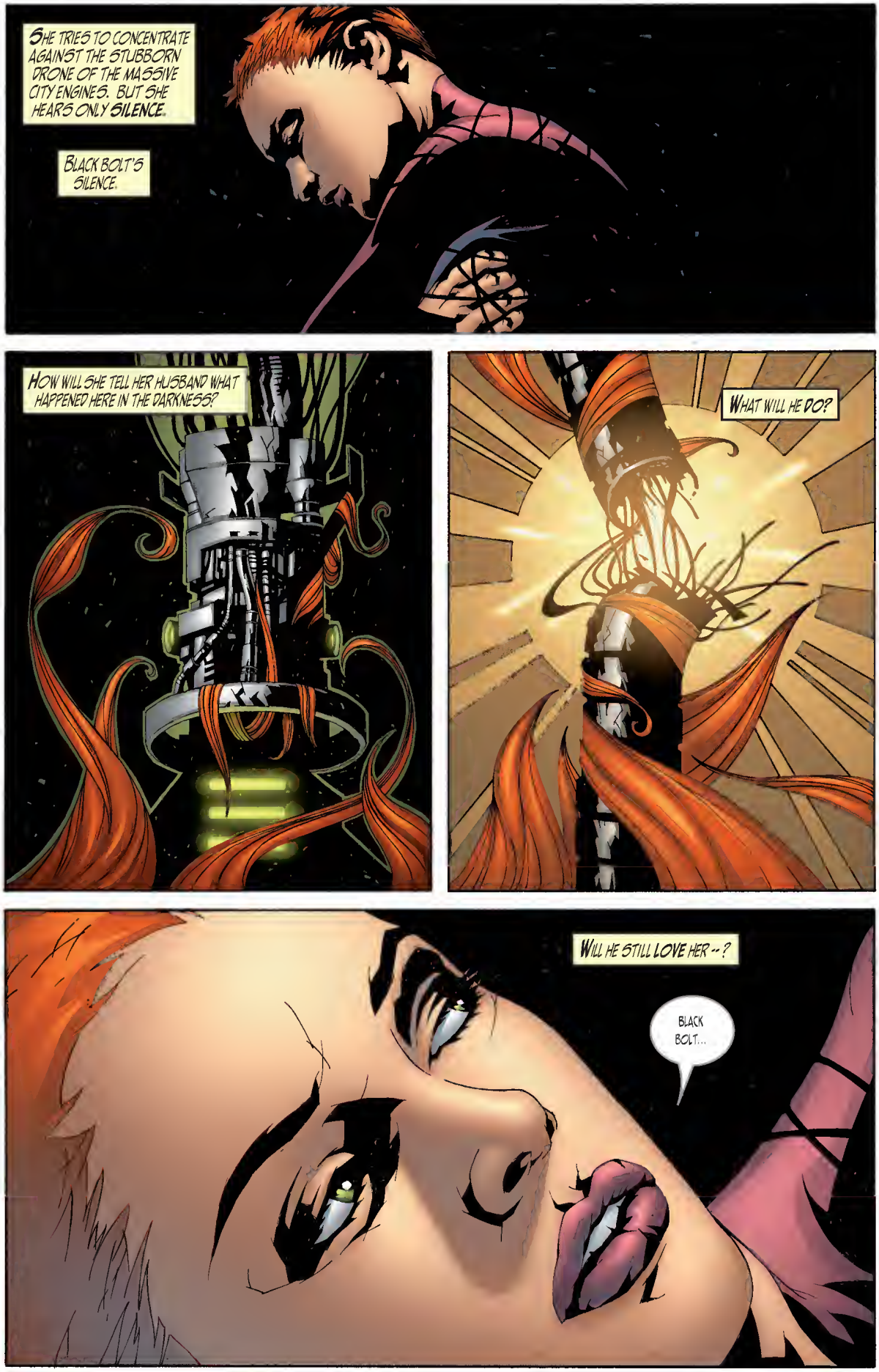

A HOPELESSNESS DESCENDS UPON THE DEFENDERS OF THE CITY.
THEY ARE ASSAILED BY A MERE HANDFUL OF HUMAN MERCENARIES WHO SEE ATTILAN AS A TREASURE CHEST OF TECHNOLOGY WAITING TO BE OPENED. AND YET THIS ONSLAUGHT DRIVES THEM BACK TO THE VERY GATES OF THE CITY.


INSIDE, EACH AND EVERY INHUMAN IS GIVEN A DEATH SENTENCE -- A FINAL PILL, ENOUGH ANTIDOTE TO COUNTERACT THE EFFECTS OF THE TOXIC AIR FOR A MERE SIX HOURS.
AFTER THAT, THE CITY MUST FALL, OR EVERYONE WILL DIE.


THERE ARE FINAL, DESPERATE ACTS OF HEROISM EVEN NOW, AS ANCIENT ATTILAN PREPARES TO MEET ITS END.
BUT THE TRUTH IS, THERE'LL BE NO ESCAPE FROM HUMANITY'S PLAGUE.


EVERYONE KNOWS, IT'S JUST A MATTER OF TIME.


HAW! YEAAHH!
WE BEAT THE FREAKS! WE BEAT THE FREAKS!
ISN'T THAT A BIT *PREMATURE*, COMMANDER STALYENKO?
HA HA! A PESSIMIST TO THE END, JARZINHO. BUT HAVE FAITH -- OUR LAST COMMUNIQUÉ FROM WITHIN THE CITY INDICATES THEY HAVE A MATTER OF MERE *HOURS*.
IT'S *OVER*.
I JUST BELIEVE IN BEING PRAGMATIC. THAT'S ALL. I'VE LEARNED NEVER TO RAISE A GLASS TO VICTORY UNTIL I'M SURE I'VE WON.
EXACTLY.


SHE TRIES TO CONCENTRATE AGAINST THE STUBBORN DRONE OF THE MASSIVE CITY ENGINES. BUT SHE HEARS ONLY SILENCE.
BLACK BOLT'S SILENCE.
HOW WILL SHE TELL HER HUSBAND WHAT HAPPENED HERE IN THE DARKNESS?
WHAT WILL HE DO?
WILL HE STILL LOVE HER --?
BLACK BOLT...


...I NEVER THOUGHT I'D SEE THE DAY WHEN ATTILAN ITSELF WOULD BE THE PRICE PAID FOR YOUR TACIT ARROGANCE, BLACK BOLT.
AS FUTILE A GESTURE AS IT IS, I MUST HEREBY ISSUE CHALLENGE TO YOUR TITLE, FOR THE SAKE OF THE CITY. DO YOU ACCEPT?
NOBLE BLACK BOLT... THIS BEING MUST HUMBLE STAND ALLIED TO THY CHALLENGER. HUMANS IS AT OUR DOOR, AND WE KNOW NOT YOUR BROTHER'S INTENDMENT --
FOR AURON'S SAKE BLACK BOLT... MY SISTER IS DOWN THERE! IS IT MY IMAGINATION, OR DO YOU JUST NOT CARE --
?!?
MY LADY CRYSTAL, TRUSTED GORGON, NOBLE TRITON... YOUR KING BEGS FOR YOUR FORGIVENESS AND UNDERSTANDING. IT IS TIME YOU WERE ALERTED TO THE TRUTH --


WHAT HAPPENED -- ?
I DON'T KNOW. THE ENTIRE POWER GRID'S BEEN SHUT DOWN.
IT... IT'S NOT POSSIBLE -- I DIDN'T GIVE THE ORDER TO TURN OFF THE POWER. WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS WANTON ACT OF INDEPENDENT THOUGHT?
Oh, PRINCE MAXIMUS... IT WAS NOT WE ALPHAS. WE ARE YOUR SERVANTS, GOOD AND TRUE
FROM THE QUEEN'S QUARTERS COMES THIS DISTURBANCE --
THE TRUTH, KARNAK? WHAT DO YOU MEAN, "THE TRUTH?"
I DEMAND TO KNOW WHAT'S HAPPENING. YOU'RE UP TO SOMETHING -- I KNOW IT!


W-WHAT'S HAPPENING...?
BY THE GODS, YOU *WILL* EXPLAIN, KARNAK! OR SO HELP ME, I'LL WRING IT OUT OF YOUR SCRAWNY LITTLE NECK --
YOU ARE ABOUT TO SEE A MOST WONDERFUL, CAREFULLY-ORCHESTRATED PLAN COME TO ITS *FRUITION*, MY FAMILY.
JUST *WATCH*...


FOR THE SAKE OF THE CITY, HE HAS ALLOWED HIS WIFE TO PUT HERSELF IN MORTAL DANGER -- TO INFILTRATE THE SUB-STRUCTURE AND DIVERT HIS LUNATIC BROTHER'S ATTENTION.
SHE WAS TO BRING DOWN THE ONE OBSTACLE HE COULD NOT OVERCOME, AND SHE HAS ACCOMPLISHED HER PART OF THE PLAN.
NOW IS HIS TIME TO ACT. AND THIS HE KNOWS: THE QUICKEST ROUTE TO ATTILAN'S ULTIMATE SALVATION...
...IS A STRAIGHT LINE.


PRINCE MAXIMUS... IT IS YOUR BROTHER, BLACK BOLT. HE COMES...
NONSENSE. EVEN WITHOUT OUR PROTECTIVE FIELD, HE COULDN'T POSSIBLY PENETRATE THIS INNER CHAMBER -- IT'S TOO WELL-GUARDED. HE'D HAVE TO BE CRAZIER THAN I AM TO TRY IT!

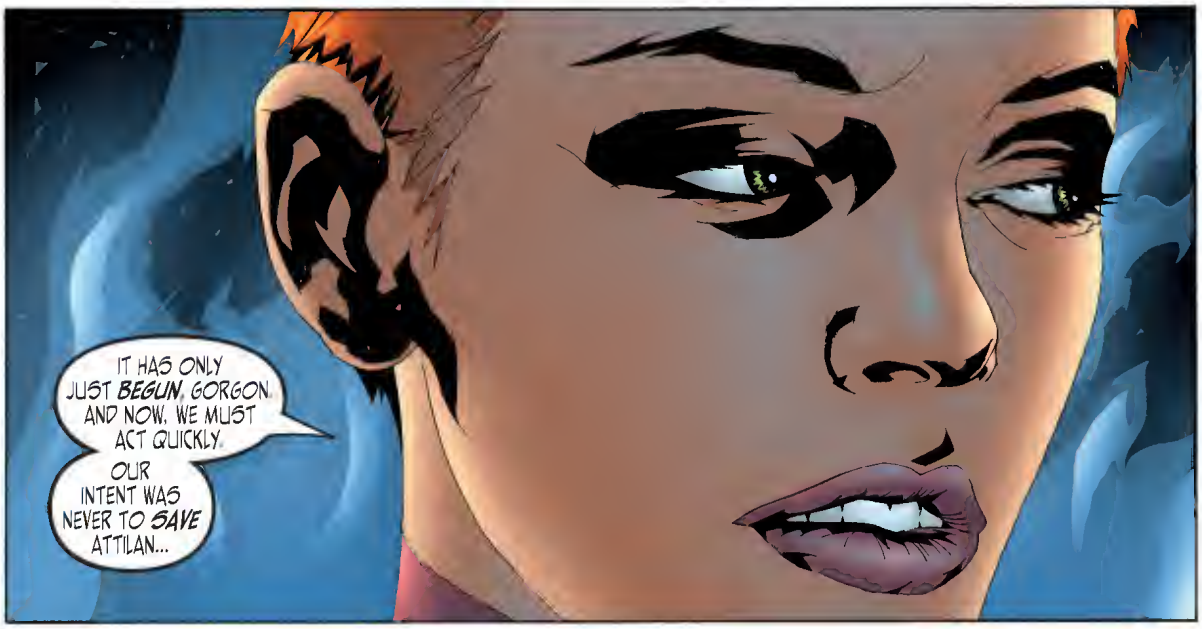

SEE TO THE LADY MEDUSA -- BRING HER TO ME. PEOPLE, I WANT SOME ANSWERS HERE...
DIDN'T WE HAVE A CONTINGENCY PLAN? ANYONE?
WILL SOMEBODY PLEASE STOP HIM --!


NO... THIS IS NOT HOW IT GOES. DO YOU HEAR ME? I GAVE NO ONE PERMISSION TO LEAVE.
I'M THE BLOODY KING AROUND HERE. SO COME BACK!
SO BE IT, THEN, BROTHER! COME AND GET ME, IF YOU DARE.
YOU CAN'T RESIST THE POWER OF MY MIND -- I'VE PROVEN THAT BEFORE.
I COMMAND YOU TO FALL!


:NNN!:
Y-YOU CAN'T RESIST ME... NO ONE CAN...
NO ONE... AH-HUHH :SNFF: NO ONE CAN...
...NO ONE...
WILL I BE PUNISHED?


MY LADY MEDUSA--
WE MUST ACT *QUICKLY*, KARNAK... BEFORE THEY SUSPECT WHAT IS HAPPENING.
SISTER! WHAT'S HAPPENED TO YOU? YOUR HAIR...
IT'S WORKING, BLACK BOLT. JUST AS YOU KNEW IT *WOULD*--
IN THE NAME OF EVOLUTION, WILL SOMEONE PLEASE TELL ME WHAT'S GOING ON BEFORE I LOSE MY MIND? WHAT IS *HAPPENING?*
YOU ARE A GOOD SOLDIER, GORGON... SURELY, THEN, YOU UNDERSTAND THAT THE QUICKEST WAY TO A VICTORY IS TO SOMETIMES APPEAR AS THOUGH YOU'RE *LOSING.*


"AT THIS MOMENT, THE HUMANS ARE LED TO BELIEVE THEY HAVE WON THE WAR.
"THEY CAN SEE THE OUTER STRUCTURES. THEY CAN SENSE THE DESPERATION OF OUR FORCES. MAXIMUS HAS INFORMED THEM THAT WE ARE DEFENSELESS."
THEY'LL HAVE NO IDEA THAT MAXIMUS HAS LOST CONTROL OF THE SUBSTRUCTURE -- HIS COMMUNICATION WITH THE OUTSIDE HAS BEEN CUT OFF.
WE HAVE THE HUMANS RIGHT WHERE WE WANT THEM.
BUT WHAT ABOUT THE DOME -- DO WE KNOW WHAT'S DESTROYING IT --?
MAXIMUS WAS LED TO BELIEVE HE HAD CREATED A DEVICE THAT DESTROYED THE DOME'S INTEGRITY.
IN FACT, THE DOME HAS BEEN UNDER OUR CONTROL -- WE SWITCHED IT OFF.
BUT THIS DOESN'T MAKE SENSE -- IF WE HAVE CONTROL OF THE CITY, THE WAR IS OURS.
IT'S OVER.


IT HAS ONLY JUST BEGUN, GORGON. AND NOW, WE MUST ACT QUICKLY.
OUR INTENT WAS NEVER TO SAVE ATTILAN...


... BUT TO DESTROY IT.
next: PLAN "B"


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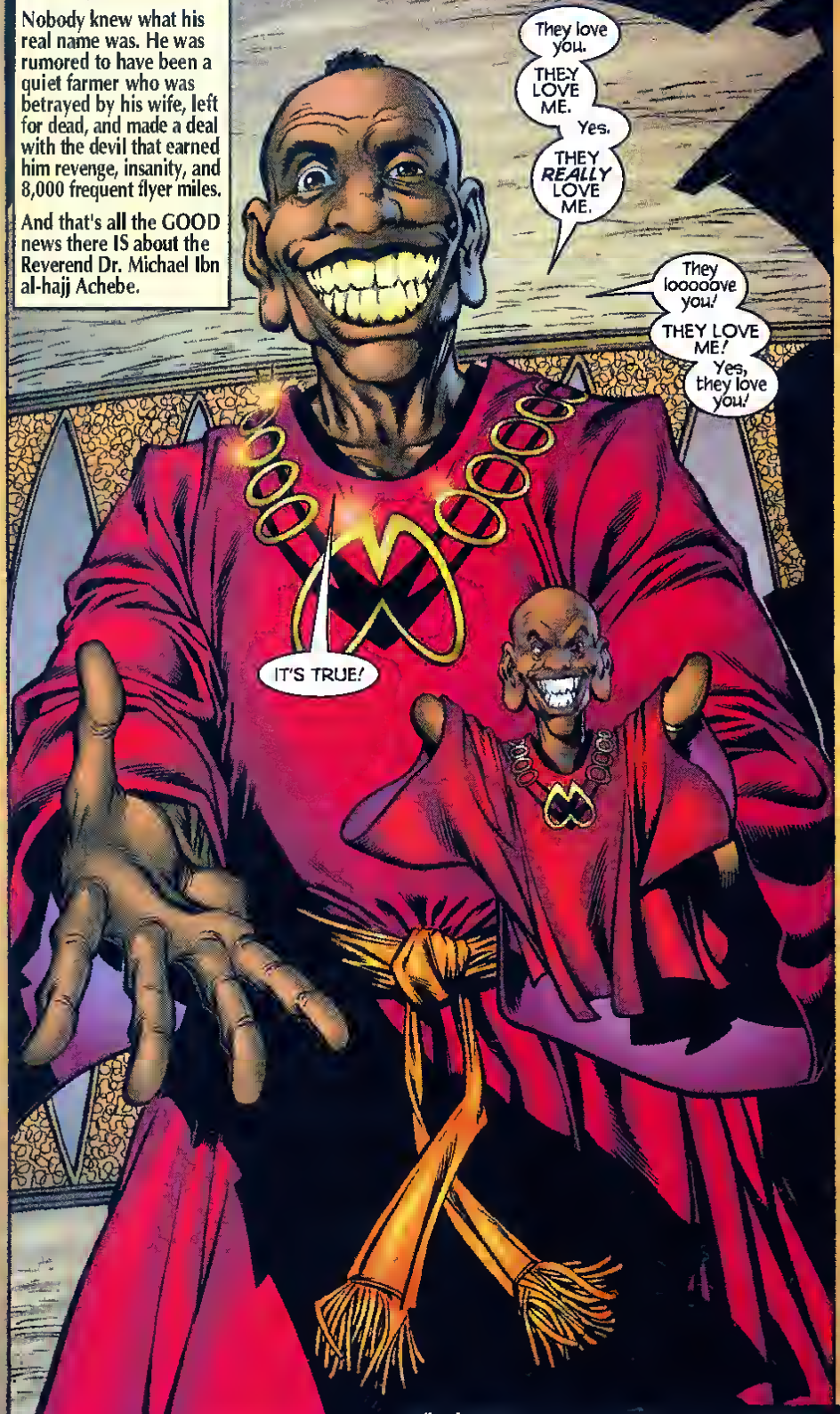
WITH THE SLEEKNESS OF THE JUNGLE CAT WHOSE NAME HE BEARS, **T-CHALLA - KING OF WAKANDA** STALKS BOTH THE CONCRETE CITY AND THE UNDERGROWTH OF THE VELDT. SO IT HAS BEEN FOR COUNTLESS GENERATIONS OF WARRIOR KINGS, SO IT IS TODAY, AND SO IT SHALL BE FOR THE LAW OF THE JUNGLE DICTATES THAT ONLY THE SWIFT, THE SMART, AND THE STRONG SURVIVE! NOBLE CHAMPION, VIGILANT PROTECTOR **STAN LEE** PRESENTS:

BLACK PANTHER

The story so far:

Nobody knew what his real name was. He was rumored to have been a quiet farmer who was betrayed by his wife, left for dead, and made a deal with the devil that earned him revenge, insanity, and 8,000 frequent flyer miles.

And that's all the GOOD news there IS about the Reverend Dr. Michael Ibn al-hajj Achebe.



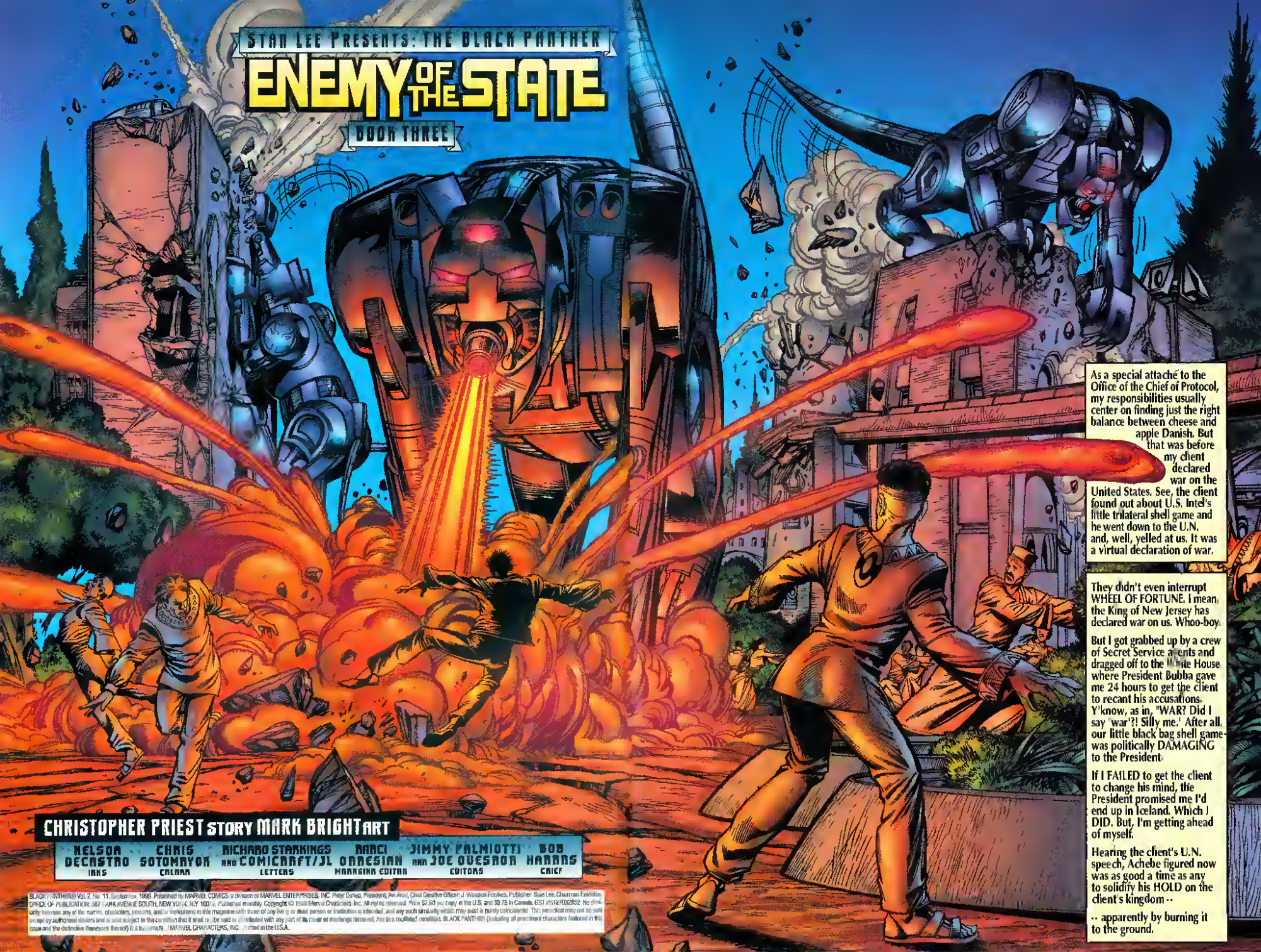
Months before, Achebe had been one of thousands of ragged refugees from a bloody, ethnic war in Ghudaza. A war instigated by Latin American terrorists who were financed by Russian mob money -- all of this courtesy of rogue factions within the U.S. Intelligence community. The idea was to destabilize the region and flood Wakanda -- a remote African nation roughly the size of New Jersey -- with fleeing Ghudazai, the Reverend Achebe chief among them.

And after luring the Wakandan king -- my client -- away from home, the U.S. Intelligence rogues triggered a palace coup, exiling my client to the U.S. and landing the good reverend in the Big Chair. Thing is, Achebe's nutbag-osity, which I'm sure the spooks originally saw as a plus, got amped to the Nth degree after he was forcibly separated from his original benefactor, a guy named Mephisto.*

Add to that the fact my client, the Wakandan king, wasn't nearly as naive as everyone hoped he'd be, and you have the potential for a real mess.

Luckily, Achebe was not one to disappoint.

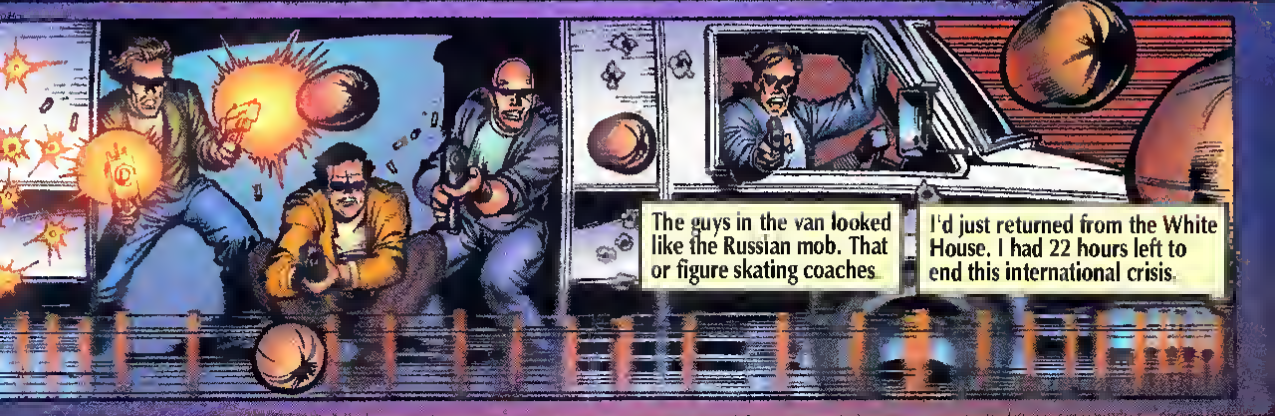
*We've been asked to explain who Mephisto is, we suppose for those of you who've been, say, on MARS for the last 25 years. Mephisto is the devil. Kinda. All you need to know --J&J

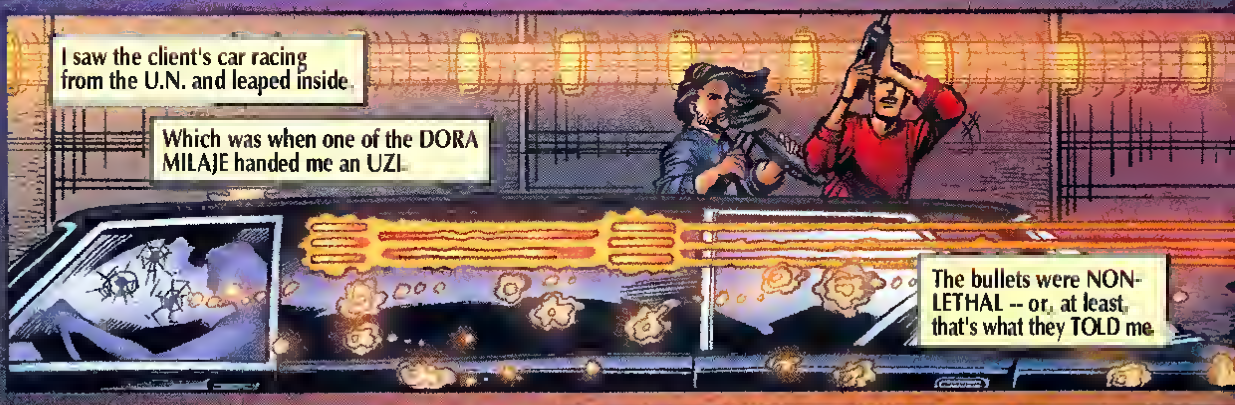


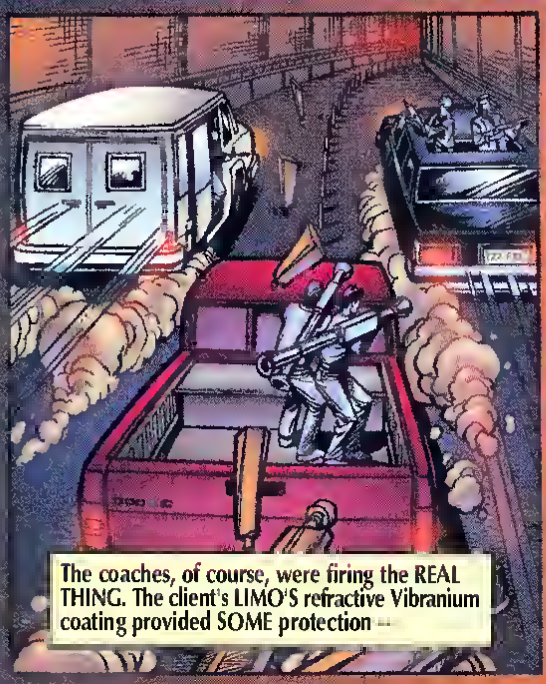
BLACK PANTHER® Vol. 2, No. 11, September, 1999. Published by MARVEL COMICS, a division of MARVEL ENTERPRISES, INC. Peter Cuneo, President, Avi Arad, Chief Creative Officer, J. Winston Fowles, Publisher. Stan Lee, Chairman Emeritus. OFFICE OF PUBLICATION: 387 PARK AVENUE SOUTH, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10016. Published monthly. Copyright © 1999 Marvel Characters, Inc. All rights reserved. Price $2.50 per copy in the U.S. and $3.75 in Canada. GST #R127032852. No similarity between any of the names, characters, persons, and/or institutions in this magazine with those of any living or dead person or institution is intended, and any such similarity which may exist is purely coincidental. This periodical may not be sold except by authorized dealers and is sold subject to the condition that it shall not be sold or circulated with any part of its cover or markings removed, nor in a mutilated condition. BLACK PANTHER (including all prominent characters featured in this issue) and the distinctive likenesses thereof) is a trademark of MARVEL CHARACTERS, INC. Printed in the U.S.A.

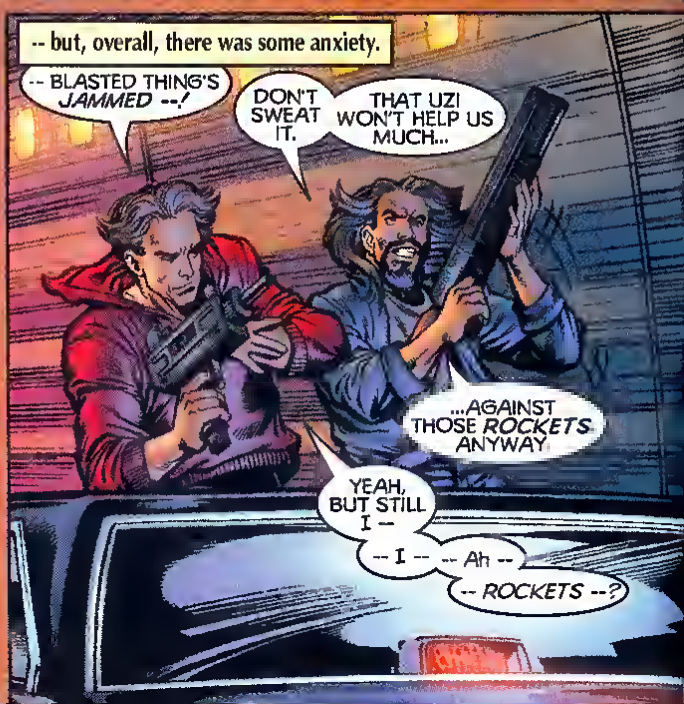
THE LAW

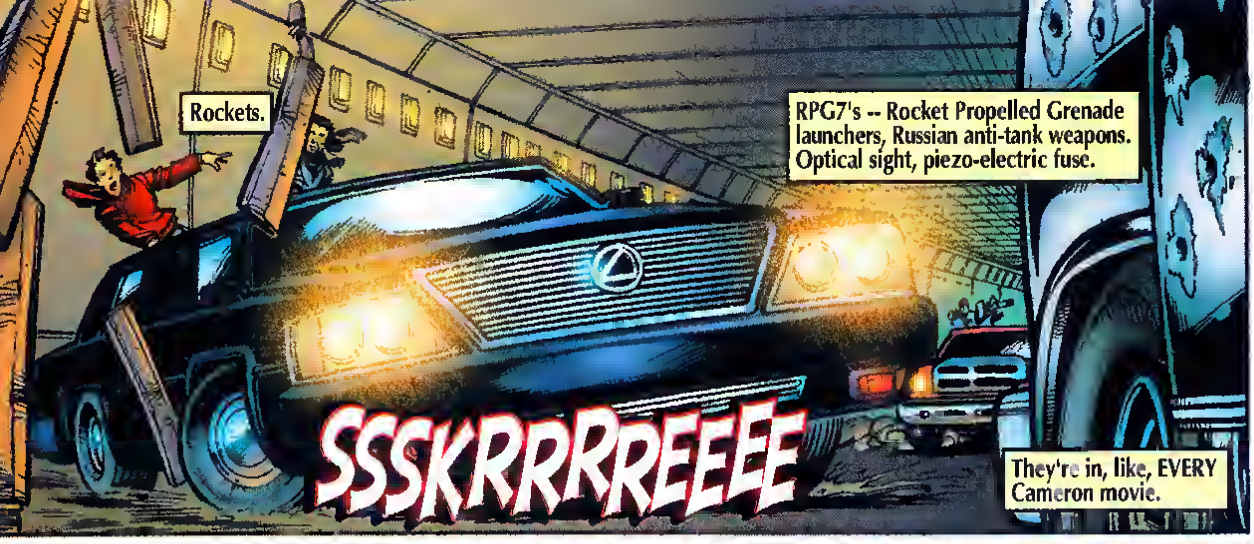

BRAAATATATATA
BOOM
BRAAATATATATA
BOOM
Meanwhile, somewhere under the East River, I was going about the business of settling the client DOWN...

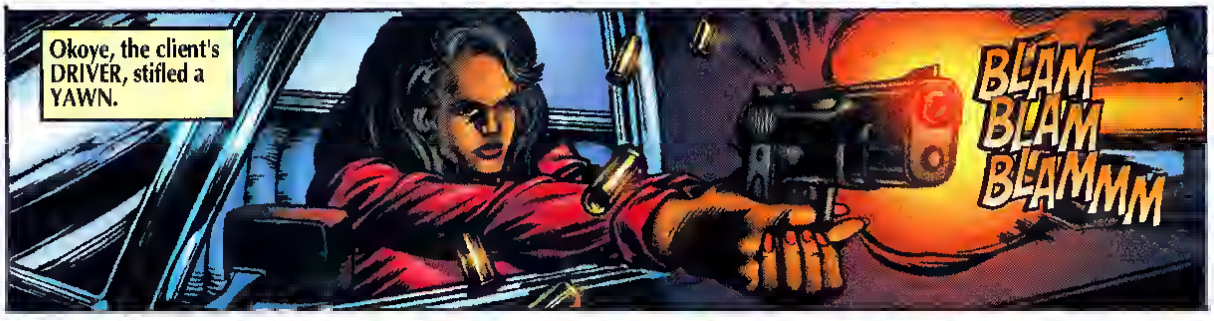

The guys in the van looked like the Russian mob. That or figure skating coaches.
I'd just returned from the White House. I had 22 hours left to end this international crisis.


I saw the client's car racing from the U.N. and leaped inside.
Which was when one of the DORA MILAJE handed me an UZI.
The bullets were NON-LETHAL -- or, at least, that's what they TOLD me.

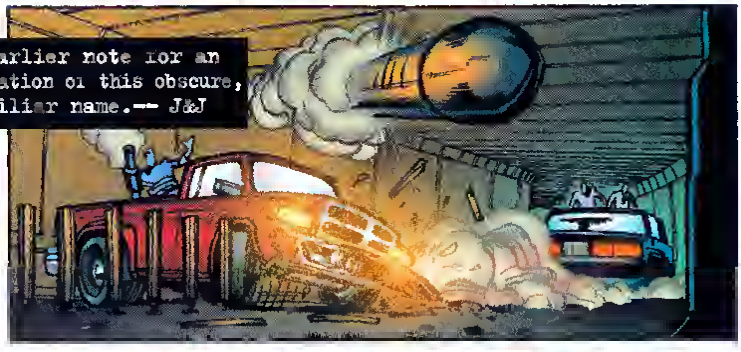

The coaches, of course, were firing the REAL THING. The client's LIMO'S refractive Vibranium coating provided SOME protection --


-- but, overall, there was some anxiety.
-- BLASTED THING'S JAMMED --!
DON'T SWEAT IT.
THAT UZI WON'T HELP US MUCH...
...AGAINST THOSE ROCKETS ANYWAY.
YEAH, BUT STILL I --
-- I --
-- Ah --
-- ROCKETS --?


Rockets.
RPG7's -- Rocket Propelled Grenade launchers, Russian anti-tank weapons. Optical sight, piezo-electric fuse.
SSSKRRRREEEE
They're in, like, EVERY Cameron movie.


Okoye, the client's DRIVER, stifled a YAWN.
BLAM BLAM BLAMMM

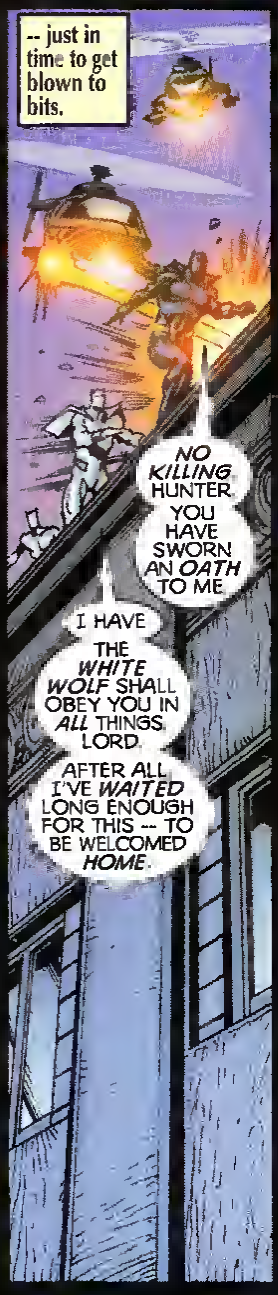

Okoye and Nakia -- the Dora Milaje -- were from rival tribal factions who would think NOTHING of blowing the Russians straight to Mephisto.*


*See earlier note for an explanation of this obscure, unfamiliar name.-- J&J

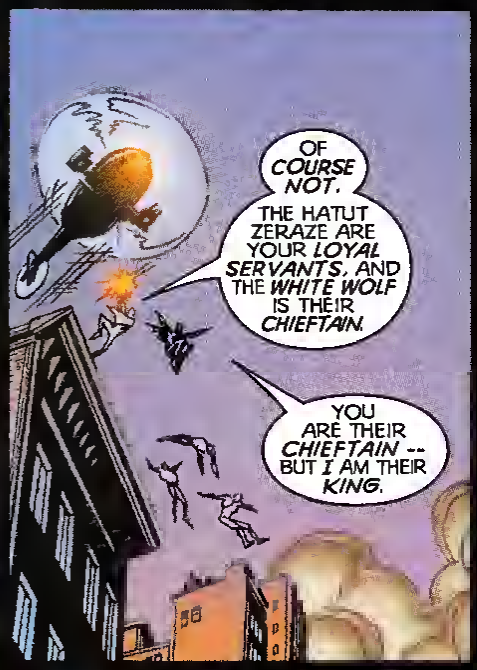

Which, I guess, was why the client equipped them with non-lethal bullets.
The slugs were hardened gelatin, I think, with a mild sedative.**
I thought seriously about shooting MYSELF.
*Similar to the Punisher's mercy bullets. The Punisher is not Mephisto.-- J&J


Later, I learned the Milaje and Zuri were following the client's ORDERS --
-- to get MONICA LYNNE, the client's former fiancee, to safety.
Which, I guess, depends on our definition of "safety."
The guys chasing us looked like Russian mob, but they might be LCL, or even U.S. Intel goons.*
Only Oliver Stone knew for sure.
SSKRAATTKK
And, before I could think to ask him --
SSPLAASSSH
-- things got incredibly more "Bad News For Ross."
*LCL= Los Cuarenta Ladrones= "The 40 Thieves," a dismissive colloquialism for El Ministerio de Asuntos Internacionales Armo Servicio de Volcan Domujo, the Volcan Domujan Secret Service -- J&J


Meanwhile, the client had finally accepted the White Wolf's pledge of loyalty --
NO NEED TO RUN, MY KING
-- THE HATUT ZERAZE CAN EASILY DISPATCH OUR PURSUERS --*
NO, HUNTER.
MY LIEGE --
-- CLEARLY THEY ARE EITHER DOMESTIC OR FOREIGN *INTELLIGENCE* AGENTS --
-- INVOLVED IN *ILLEGAL* AND *UNCHARTERED* ACTIVITY.
I ASSURE YOU, NO INQUIRIES WILL BE MADE --
*Hatut Zeraze= "Logs Oi War" -- J&J


-- just in time to get blown to bits.
NO KILLING, HUNTER. YOU HAVE SWORN AN *OATH* TO ME.
I HAVE. THE *WHITE WOLF* SHALL OBEY YOU IN *ALL* THINGS, LORD.
AFTER ALL I'VE *WAITED* LONG ENOUGH FOR THIS -- TO BE WELCOMED *HOME*.


SINCE THE DAY YOU ASCENDED YOUR FATHER'S THRONE -- AND *DISSOLVED* THE HATUT ZERAZE BECAUSE OF OBJECTIONS TO OUR...METHODS
OBJECTIONS WHICH *REMAIN*, HUNTER.
FROM THIS DAY FORWARD, YOU WILL CHANGE YOUR WAYS. TORTURE, BRUTALITY AND ASSASSINATION SHALL *NOT* BE TOLERATED.


OF *COURSE NOT*. THE HATUT ZERAZE ARE YOUR *LOYAL SERVANTS*, AND THE *WHITE WOLF* IS THEIR *CHIEFTAIN*.
YOU ARE THEIR *CHIEFTAIN* -- BUT *I* AM THEIR *KING*.


YES, OF COURSE. THAT'S WHAT I MEANT.
SSPLAASSSH

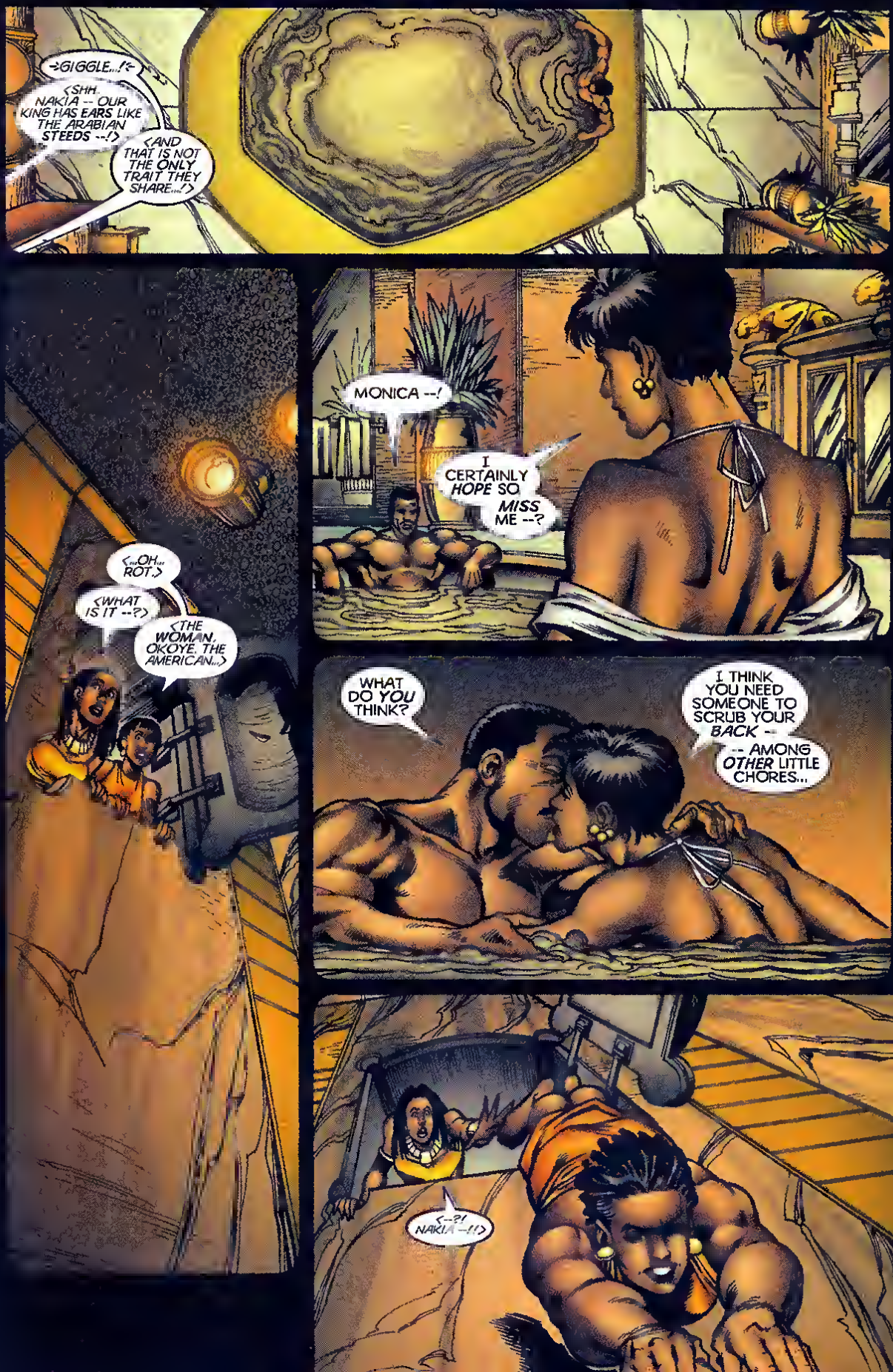

YOU SEE 'EM --?
-- WAIT -- I THINK SOMETHING'S COMING UP --
THEY'VE OT TO SURFACE SOONER OR LATER --


The thing people keep forgettin about my client is, well, he's a KING.
He's not just another nut job in tights. He's a full-bird monarch from one of the most technologically advanced nations on the planet. And, somehow, we keep forgetting that.
FFWWWOOOSH
I mean, if there's a guy who is totally capable of hiding an amphibious craft the size of the Jupiter 2 in the East River -- well, a guy OTHER than Prince Namor -- my client would be IT. There were over 150 heavily armed Wakandan Special Forces Group soldiers on board. How LONG they'd been there, just waiting for the king's "GO" call, is anybody's guess. But, the lump in my throat told me, for all we knew, the client could have parked 300 of these things all over the country.
The main difference between King T'Challa and Prince Namor is the ATTITUDE. EITHER of them could park an ARMY in our back yard and it'd all be OVER before we knew what hit us. The King of New Jersey had declared war on the United States of America. But, what nobody actually realized, he was TOTALLY capable of FIGHTING IT --
-- and maybe even WINNING IT.


The only thing that didn't work for me was his letting the KIDS drive.
I mean, I never "got" that Wesley kid at the wheel of the Enterprise, y'know?
Three decks below, the client and his merry men toweled off...
...uggh. Used "men" and "towel" in the same sentence...must...die now...
EXCELLENT! YOU'VE HIDDEN THE N'YAMI IN THE RIVER!
I SHOULD HAVE SUSPECTED —
-- I'M IMPRESSED. IT'S JUST WHAT I WOULD HAVE DONE.
YOU SHOULD DESTROY THOSE CHOPPERS, LORD KING. MAKE AN EXAMPLE OF THEM
TEACH YOUR ENEMIES THE ERROR OF UNDERESTIMATING WAKANDA'S LIEGE.
SSSZZZAAACCKK
MY THOUGHTS EXACTLY.


It suddenly occurred to me: the client was springing the traps. All of 'em.
Far from being this naive dupe -- lured away from home and taken by surprise --
-- I was finally starting to realize the client was much more like the PUPPET MASTER.
Always one step ahead of the bad guys, and manipulating things to his advantage.
If I could have raised my hand, I would have slapped myself.
Achebe, U.S. Intel, LCL, Mob, White Wolf -- my guess now is the client had REAMS of files on these people, and probability studies predicting all of this YEARS ago.
He'd been WATCHING the WATCHERS. He KNEW eventually they'd move on him.
He'd walked the plaza... studied every inch... chatted with Donald Sutherland --
-- whoops... saw "JFK" too many times...
MY APOLOGIES, AGENT ROSS THE G-FORCES TAKE SOME GETTING USED TO.
HEY, NO PROB. I WASN'T *USING* THESE TEETH ANYWAY.
SPEAK FOR *YOURSELF*, HALF PINT.
MONICA...
GLAD YOU REMEMBERED MY *NAME*.
THESE DAYS I FEEL LIKE CHANGING IT TO "HOCKEY PUCK" T'CHALLA --
-- I WANT TO GO *HOME* NOW.
<...SPOILED AMERICAN WITCH.>*
I DO NOT SAY SUCH THINGS, NAKIA -- SHE HAS *ALWAYS* BEEN THE KING'S *BELOVED*.>
<TRUE. AND I HAVE *ALWAYS* *DESPISED* HER.>
*The Dora Milaje speak Hausa -- J&J.

FEAR AND LOATHING




THWOOM
WHAT THE --?!
IT'S -- IT'S ONE OF THE CHILDREN --! SUMMON THE SURGEON -- HURRY!
NAKIA...
...BELOVED...
...DO NOT LEAVE ME...
...COME ON BELOVED...
...COME BACK TO ME...


<NAKIA.>
<CHILD -- WHERE HAVE YOU GONE TO --?!>
<WHERE ELSE WOULD I GO, OKOYE -->
<-- BUT TO MY LOVER'S WAITING ARMS.>
<YOU HAVE NEVER HAD A LOVER, NAKIA, AND NEITHER HAVE I.>
<WE ARE THE KING'S CONCOMITANTS. AND SHALL REMAIN PURE UNTIL WE ARE RELEASED FROM OUR VOW.>
<I WILL NOT BE RELEASED. I WILL BE MARRIED.>
<THOUGH WE ARE OF DIFFERENT TRIBES...
...YOU ARE AS MY OWN SISTER, NAKIA -->
<-- AND SO IT IS WITH LOVE IN MY HEART THAT I REMIND YOU OUR MASTER WAS UNDER MEPHISTO'S INFLUENCE WHEN HE KISSED YOU>"
<HE LOVES HER. THE AMERICAN.>
<THE AMERICAN IS IRRELEVANT.>
<HE LOVES ME AND ME ONLY.>
*issue #3 -- J&J
I THOUGHT WE HAD A DEAL, T'CHALLA.
I THOUGHT AFTER MY ROYAL DUMPING, I'D BE THROUGH WITH THIS KIND OF THING.
I'VE BEEN KIDNAPPED. MADE INTO A HUMAN BOMB. ARRESTED. TRAILED BY SPY-GUYS. SHOT AT. AND "DETAINED" BY THAT CREEPY WHITE WOLF.
ALL IN ALL, A PRETTY FULL DAY.
TO THINK THAT ANY OF THIS WAS MY WISH IS COMPLETE FOOLISHNESS, MONICA --
-- WHICH LEAVES ONLY YOUR SELFISHNESS. FROM THE DAY WE MET --
-- WHEN YOU SAVED MY LIFE -- PULLED ME FROM THE RIVER OF GRACE AND WISDOM -- YOU KNEW I AM WHAT I AM.
YOU ARE ON A PATH OF YOUR OWN CHOOSING.

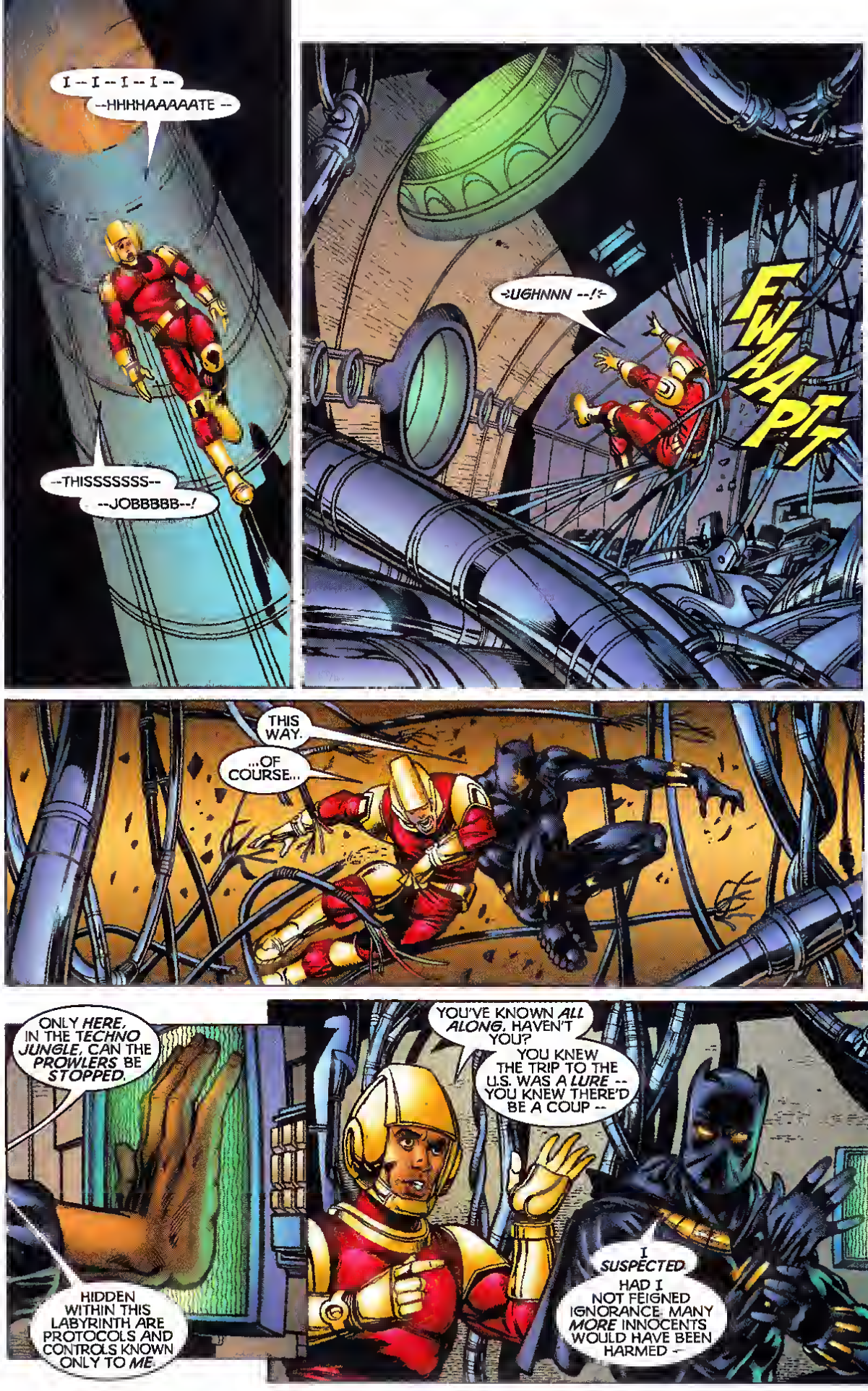
CHEESE SNOW SHOES




-- when I spotted giant robot panthers attacking the Wakandan central city.
Snow shoes. Size 6.
The PROWLERS were a doomsday weapon, intended to be activated only when all the spit had hit the fan.
And they WEREN'T supposed to be attacking WAKANDA.
Thank you, Dr. Achebe.
YES! NAIL 'EM, YOUR HIGH --
-- HIGH --
-- HIGH --
-- HIGH --
-- AH --
THOOOOMM
Ah... ...LOOKS LIKE THE FUN POLICE HAVE FINALLY ARRIVED...
The game... is at hand.


UH-UH. NO WAY.
LOOK, KID, TURN THIS BUCKET AROUND
I DIDN'T SIGN UP FOR THIS --
HE LOVES ME.
YEAH? AND? T'CHALLA LOVES LOTS OF KIDS.
NO. HE LOVES ME AS A MAN LOVES A WOMAN.
AS A HUSBAND LOVES A WIFE.
FOUR WORDS, BRANDY: LAY OFF THE CRACK.
YOU ARE A CHILD TO T'CHALLA, AND YOU'RE NEVER GONNA CATCH UP.
NOT THAT I CARE, MIND YOU. BUT HOLD THAT SKIRT DOWN, GIRLFRIEND --
--?!
THOOMM
I slammed into the ground like a bug hitting a windshield.
Laser beams everywhere.
Not a single TOILET in SIGHT.
And, even then, the only thing on my mind --?


-- Iceland.
SAY, YOUR HIGHNESS --
-- I WAS THINKING -- WELL, MAYBE, WHEN YOU GET A MINUTE --
-- WE COULD TALK ABOUT THAT U.N. SPEECH YOU GAVE --
-- MAYBE ISSUE A TINY CLARIFICATION --
SSSHHHWAAAFH
-- OR ALTERNATIVELY, I COULD JUST CHANGE MY SHORTS.
ACHEBE'S GHUDAZAI LOYALISTS ARE ALL OVER THE CENTRAL CITY, YOUR HIGHNESS! AND NOW THAT YOUR SPECIAL OPS GUYS HAVE BEEN SPOTTED --
-- WELL, THINGS COULD GET REALLY BLOODY, SIR.
-- AND ISN'T THAT EXACTLY WHAT YOU WANTED TO AVOID?
YES. THE TIMING IS NOT OF MY CHOOSING, FRIEND ROSS. BLOOD WILL BE SPILLED --
-- AND ACHEBE SHALL ANSWER FOR THAT.
HEY -- NEAT TRICK WITH THE FAKE TREE, VERY TIM BURTON.
WHAT'S THE BIG TUBE FOR --
-- OF COURSE --

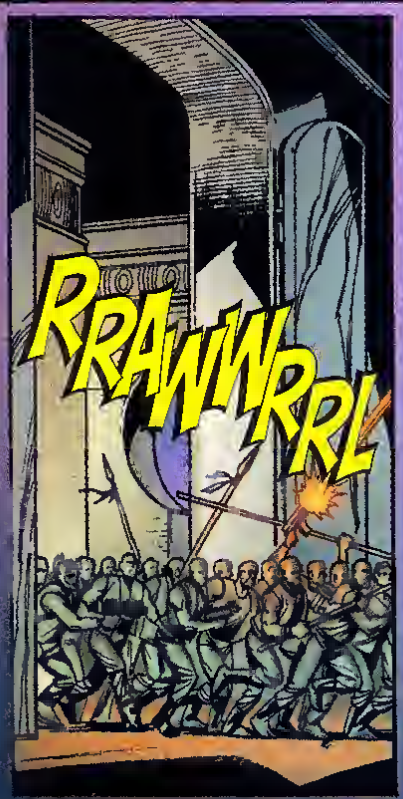

I--I--I--I--
--HHHHAAAAAATE--
--THISSSSSSS--
--JOBBBBB--!
-UGHNNN --!-
FWAAPT
THIS WAY.
...OF COURSE...
ONLY HERE, IN THE TECHNO JUNGLE, CAN THE PROWLERS BE STOPPED.
HIDDEN WITHIN THIS LABYRINTH ARE PROTOCOLS AND CONTROLS KNOWN ONLY TO ME.
YOU'VE KNOWN ALL ALONG, HAVEN'T YOU?
YOU KNEW THE TRIP TO THE U.S. WAS A LURE -- YOU KNEW THERE'D BE A COUP --
I SUSPECTED.
HAD I NOT FEIGNED IGNORANCE, MANY MORE INNOCENTS WOULD HAVE BEEN HARMED --


--AND I WOULD NOT KNOW THE FACES OF MY BETRAYERS.
WAIT HERE.
-- Ah --
-- YEAH... MAYBE I'LL WAIT HERE --
SSZAACCKK
BLAM
KADD
BRAAATATATTATA
The Adventures of Wuss-Boy, Chapter 12:
"The Day I Let My Client Get Hacked To Death By Nutty Ghudazai Tribesmen."
A REAL man would have charged in there AFTER him.
And, had a real man BEEN there, he WOULD have.
...Ah...
...YOUR HIGHNESS.?
GGHHAAH--
-- DAZAI! A GHUDAZAI TRIBESMAN! YOU NAILED HIM, SIR. I WAS JUST ABOUT TO --
-- wet myself. Again.
THROUGH HERE -- QUICKLY.


C'MON -- C'MON, YOU MUTTS --! BRING IT TO ME!
MWAHAHAHAHAHA!
SHOW ME WHAT'CHA GOT!
YOU KNOW -- FOR A SCRAWNY WHITE MAN, YOU ARE NOT COMPLETELY USELESS IN BATTLE, SERGEANT TORK!

WELL, GEE, COMIN' FROM A BIG, OLD, GRITS-AND-CATFISH, FRED SANFORD- LOOKING SOUL BROTHER LIKE YOU, ZURI --
THOOOM
-- "THOOM?"
UNIVERSAL ANNOUNCEMENT OF MAJOR BAD NEWS.

...AH...
...RUN.


RRAWWRRL


LEAVE THE GHUDAZAI TO MY WARRIORS, FRIEND ROSS.
IF... IF YOU INSIST...


ACHEBE SACRIFICES HIS OWN KINSMEN IN VAIN --
<NAKIA -- BELOVED -- REPORT.>
<I HAVE COME TO PROTECT MY KING, LORD.>


<I DO NOT UNDERSTAND. YOU WERE TO GET MS. LYNNE TO THE SECURE HOUSE -->
<THE WOMAN IS DEAD.>
--? WHAT --?
<I... I HAVE FAILED YOU, MY LORD.>
<YOUR GREAT LOVE IS DEAD -- FELLED BY GHUDAZAI BULLETS -->
<YOU, GIRL, ARE LYING.>
<FOR WHAT REASON, I DO NOT KNOW. BUT, REST ASSURED, YOUR KING WILL HAVE AN ANSWER -->
<-- AFTER WHICH SHALL COME THE RECKONING.>
...AH... YOUR HIGHNESS...
...I KNOW SHE'S TALL AS A TREE AND ALL, BUT YOU DO REALIZE --
-- SHE'S STILL JUST A KID, RIGHT?
I DO --
-- AND, AS SUCH, IT IS MY DUTY TO CORRECT HER.
AND SO IT ENDS, EH UKATANA --?

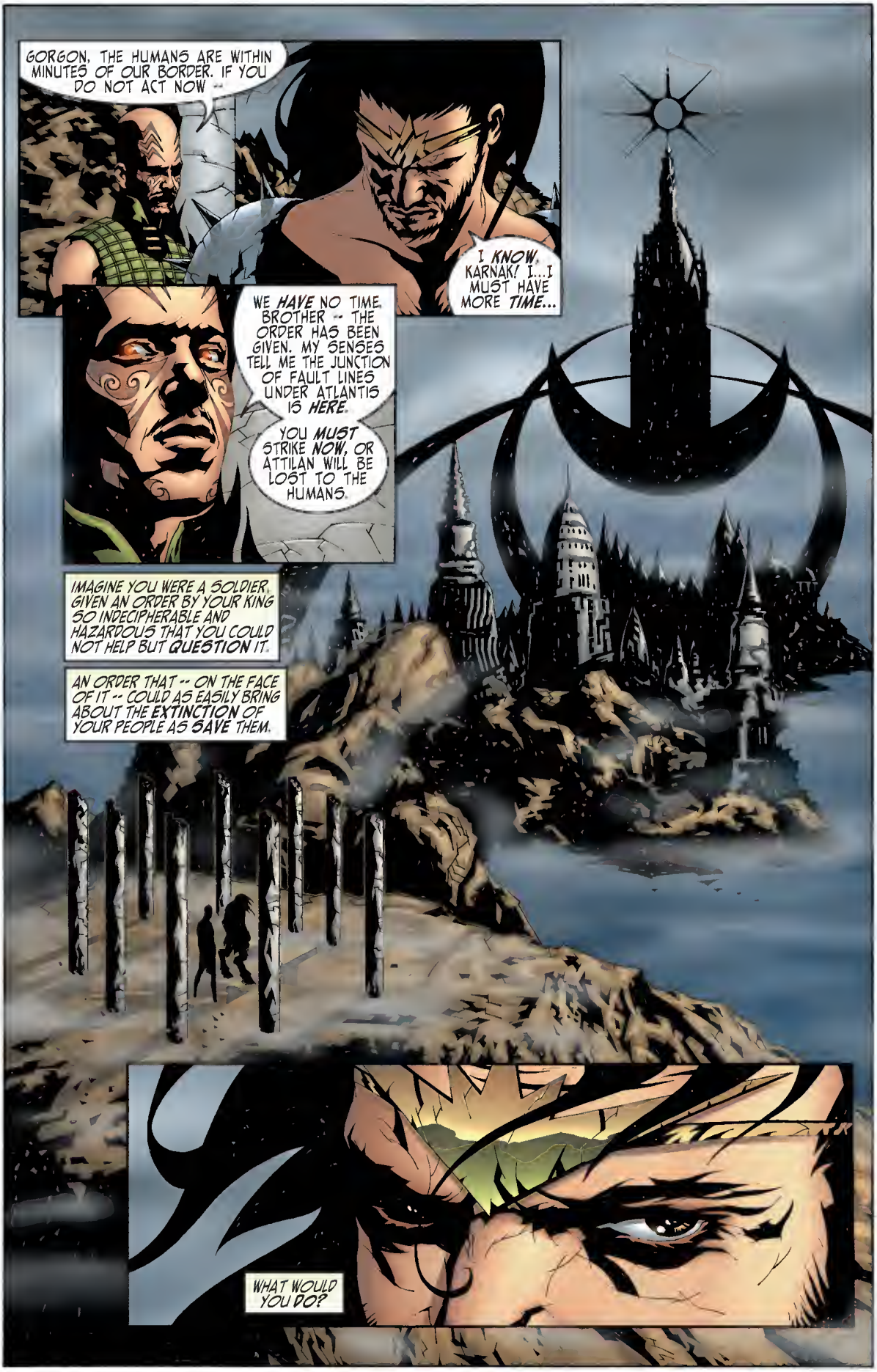


NEXT:

THE TAKING OF WAKANDA 1-2-3


MARVEL
KNIGHTS
#12
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JENKINS
LEE
INHUMANS®


IMAGINE YOU WERE GORGON -- LORD HIGH COMMANDER OF THE IMPERIAL FORCES OF NEW ATTILAN, TRUSTED COUSIN OF THE KING...
...A CREATURE SO RADICALLY ALTERED BY A QUIRK OF GENETIC FATE, THAT WITH A SINGLE STRIKE OF YOUR THUNDERING HOOVES, YOU COULD CREATE AN EARTHQUAKE.
IMAGINE YOU'D JUST WON A WAR YOU HAD BEEN CERTAIN WAS LOST, RESCUING NOT ONLY YOUR CITY, BUT YOUR ENTIRE SPECIES FROM THE BRINK OF ANNIHILATION.
NOW, IMAGINE THAT JUST AFTER YOU'D SAVED THE CITY, YOU WERE TOLD TO SINK IT.
WHAT WOULD YOU DO?


GORGON, THE HUMANS ARE WITHIN MINUTES OF OUR BORDER. IF YOU DO NOT ACT NOW --
I KNOW, KARNAK! I...I MUST HAVE MORE TIME...
WE HAVE NO TIME, BROTHER -- THE ORDER HAS BEEN GIVEN. MY SENSES TELL ME THE JUNCTION OF FAULT LINES UNDER ATLANTIS IS HERE.
YOU MUST STRIKE NOW, OR ATTILAN WILL BE LOST TO THE HUMANS.
IMAGINE YOU WERE A SOLDIER, GIVEN AN ORDER BY YOUR KING SO INDECIPHERABLE AND HAZARDOUS THAT YOU COULD NOT HELP BUT QUESTION IT.
AN ORDER THAT -- ON THE FACE OF IT -- COULD AS EASILY BRING ABOUT THE EXTINCTION OF YOUR PEOPLE AS SAVE THEM.
WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

PAUL JENKINS DIRTY ROTTEN PLOTTER
JAE LEE CON ARTIST
DAVE KEMP COLORING THE TRUTH
RS&COMICRAFT/ST SCHEMING
JOE QUESADA & JIMMY PALMIOTTI PLANNING A COUP
NANCI DAKESIAN MANAGING SCOUNDRELETTE
BOB HARRAS NAUGHTYPERSONINCHIEF

STAN LEE PRESENTS: PLAN "B"

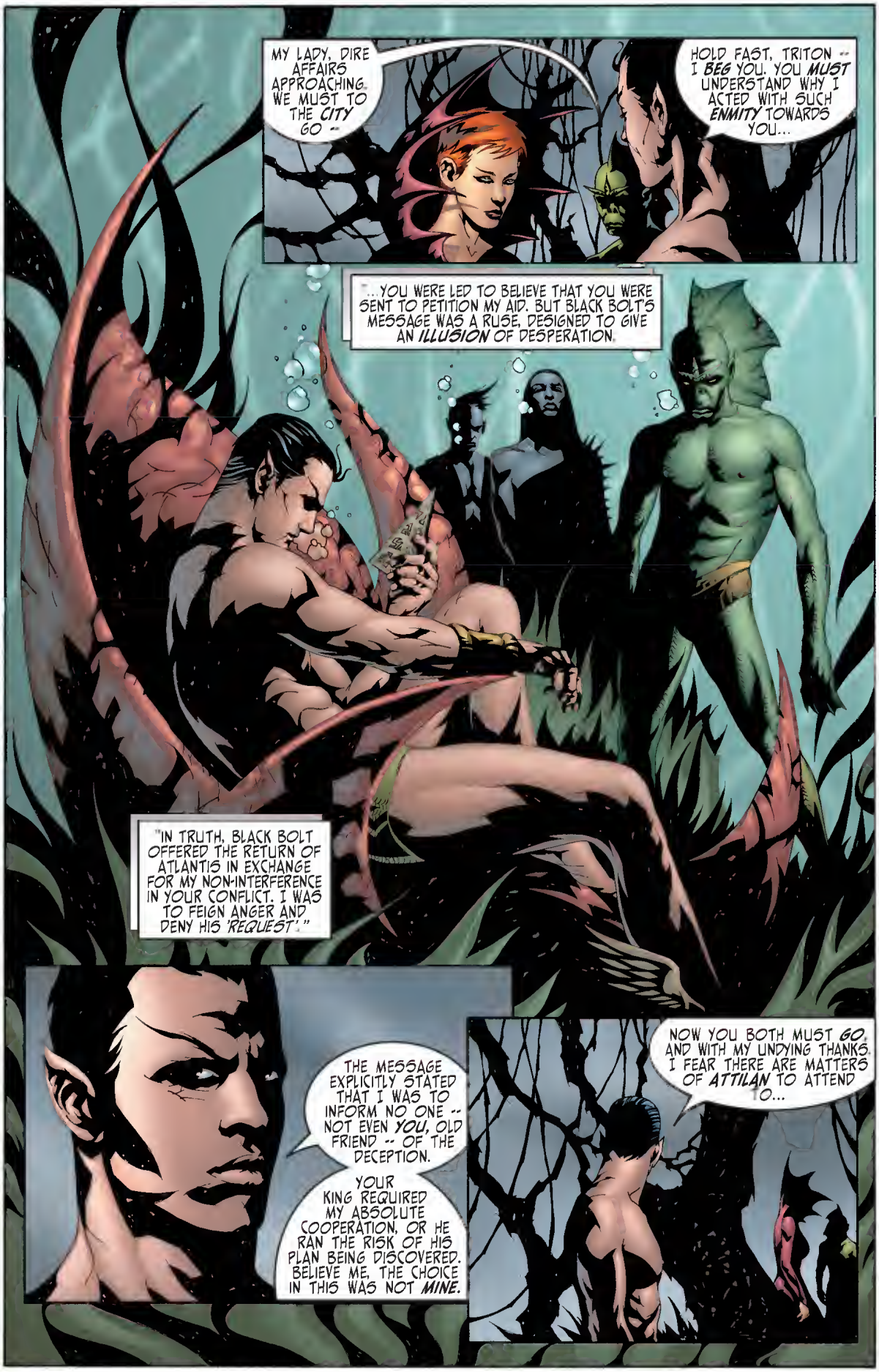


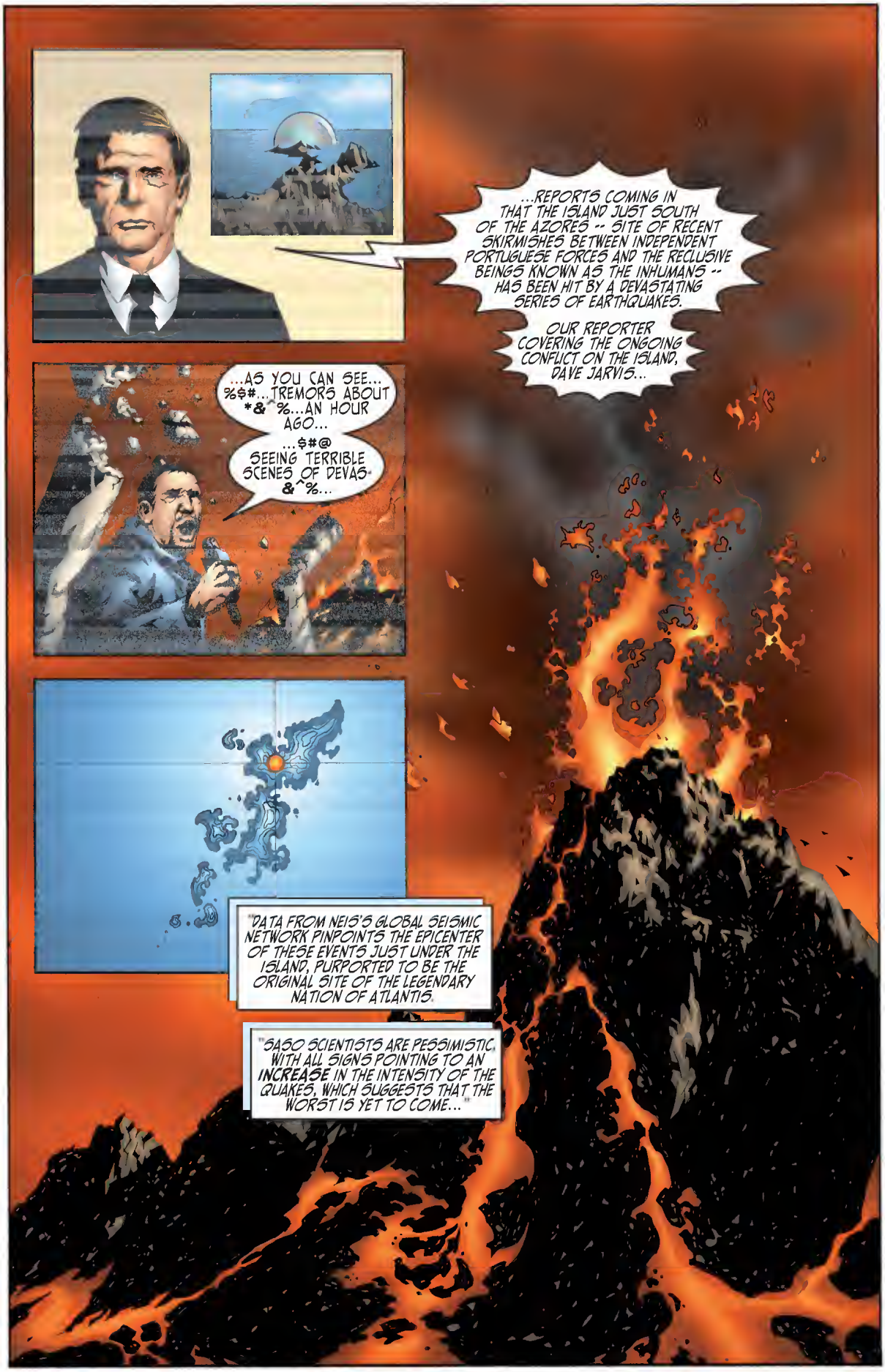
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WHAT'S HAPPENING?
THEY'RE RETREATING INTO THE CITY, COMMANDER STALYENKO. ALL OF THEM.
I DON'T UNDERSTAND IT... AFTER ALL THE EFFORT THEY'VE PUT UP TO DEFEND THEIR HOME AGAINST US, WHY STOP NOW?
HA HA! THERE IS NOTHING TO UNDERSTAND, JARZINHO -- THE CREATURES HAVE RUN OUT OF THEIR ANTIDOTE TO THE EFFECTS OF OUR ATMOSPHERE...
...JUST AS MAXIMUS SAID THEY WOULD. NOW, WE MERELY WALK ACROSS TO THE CITY AND --
-- DID YOU HEAR SOMETHING?


BAKOOM
LOOK OUT!
WHAT'S HAPPENED? DID THEY RETURN FIRE --?
YOU IDIOT, STALYENKO! YOU ARROGANT, ARROGANT FOOL! WE WERE WARNED!
MAXIMUS TOLD US WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF WE ALLOWED HEAVY ARTILLERY INTO COMBAT TOO CLOSE TO THE FAULT LINE!
WE'VE TRIGGERED AN EARTHQUAKE!


IMAGINE YOU WERE MEDUSA, QUEEN OF A FABULOUS CITY STATE -- A WOMAN OF THE UTMOST BEAUTY, GRACE AND INTEGRITY.
IMAGINE YOUR HUSBAND HAD ASKED THAT YOU ALLOW YOURSELF TO BE BRUTALIZED AND DISFIGURED: THAT YOUR HAIR -- THE SOURCE OF YOUR POWER -- BE SHORN FROM YOUR HEAD IN ORDER TO HELP PROTECT THE PEOPLE OF ATTILAN AGAINST A HUMAN PLAGUE.
HOW WOULD YOU FEEL?
PRINCE NAMOR...
MY LADY MEDUSA, LORD TRITON... I FEAR THAT TIME IS NO LONGER WITH US. IT WOULD APPEAR EVENTS HAVE BEEN SET IN MOTION THAT CANNOT BE REVERSED.
THUSLY, I BRING A MESSAGE TO YOUR KING. TELL HIM THIS, MEDUSA OF ATTILAN:
I, NAMOR -- PRINCE OF ATLANTIS -- OWE TO HIM AND ALL THE PEOPLE OF ATTILAN...
...A DEBT WHICH CAN NEVER BE REPAID.

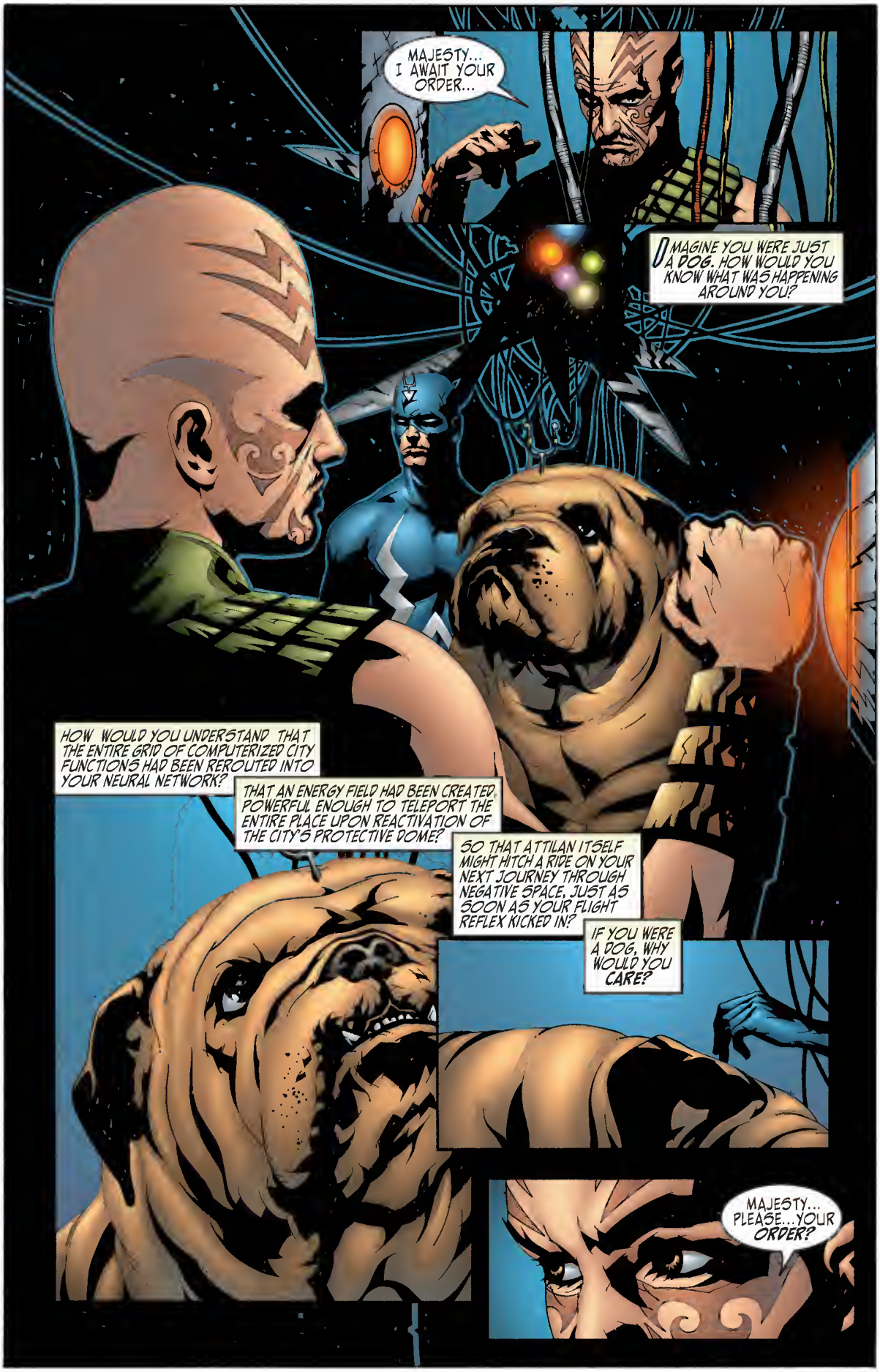

MY LADY, DIRE AFFAIRS APPROACHING. WE MUST TO THE CITY GO --
HOLD FAST, TRITON -- I BEG YOU. YOU MUST UNDERSTAND WHY I ACTED WITH SUCH ENMITY TOWARDS YOU...
"...YOU WERE LED TO BELIEVE THAT YOU WERE SENT TO PETITION MY AID. BUT BLACK BOLT'S MESSAGE WAS A RUSE, DESIGNED TO GIVE AN ILLUSION OF DESPERATION.
"IN TRUTH, BLACK BOLT OFFERED THE RETURN OF ATLANTIS IN EXCHANGE FOR MY NON-INTERFERENCE IN YOUR CONFLICT. I WAS TO FEIGN ANGER AND DENY HIS 'REQUEST'."
THE MESSAGE EXPLICITLY STATED THAT I WAS TO INFORM NO ONE -- NOT EVEN YOU, OLD FRIEND -- OF THE DECEPTION.
YOUR KING REQUIRED MY ABSOLUTE COOPERATION, OR HE RAN THE RISK OF HIS PLAN BEING DISCOVERED. BELIEVE ME, THE CHOICE IN THIS WAS NOT MINE.
NOW YOU BOTH MUST GO, AND WITH MY UNDYING THANKS. I FEAR THERE ARE MATTERS OF ATTILAN TO ATTEND TO...


...REPORTS COMING IN THAT THE ISLAND JUST SOUTH OF THE AZORES -- SITE OF RECENT SKIRMISHES BETWEEN INDEPENDENT PORTUGUESE FORCES AND THE RECLUSIVE BEINGS KNOWN AS THE INHUMANS -- HAS BEEN HIT BY A DEVASTATING SERIES OF EARTHQUAKES.
OUR REPORTER COVERING THE ONGOING CONFLICT ON THE ISLAND, DAVE JARVIS...
...AS YOU CAN SEE... %$#...TREMORS ABOUT *&^%...AN HOUR AGO...
...$#@ SEEING TERRIBLE SCENES OF DEVAS- &^%...
"DATA FROM NEIS'S GLOBAL SEISMIC NETWORK PINPOINTS THE EPICENTER OF THESE EVENTS JUST UNDER THE ISLAND, PURPORTED TO BE THE ORIGINAL SITE OF THE LEGENDARY NATION OF ATLANTIS.
"SASO SCIENTISTS ARE PESSIMISTIC, WITH ALL SIGNS POINTING TO AN INCREASE IN THE INTENSITY OF THE QUAKES, WHICH SUGGESTS THAT THE WORST IS YET TO COME..."

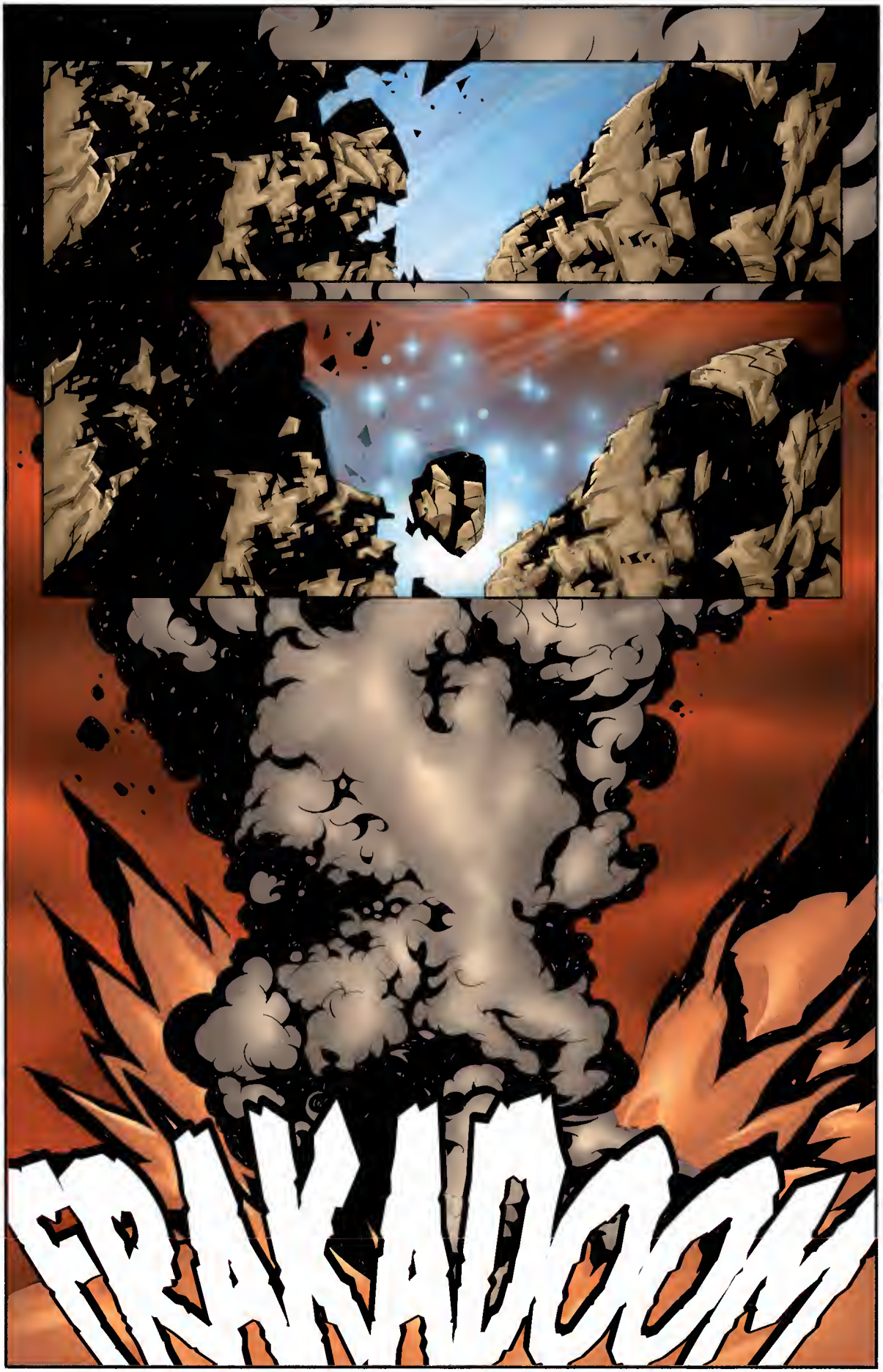

TONAJA... WE'VE BEEN ORDERED BACK INTO THE CITY --
BUT WHY? I DON'T UNDERSTAND, NEIFI --
IT'S OVER. WHAT ELSE IS THERE TO UNDERSTAND?
KRAKAK
...ALL MEN ACCOUNTED FOR, SIR. WE'RE GOING TO HAVE TO GET OFF THIS ISLAND BEFORE THERE'S NOTHING LEFT OF IT...!
WHERE'S COMMANDER STALYENKO...?

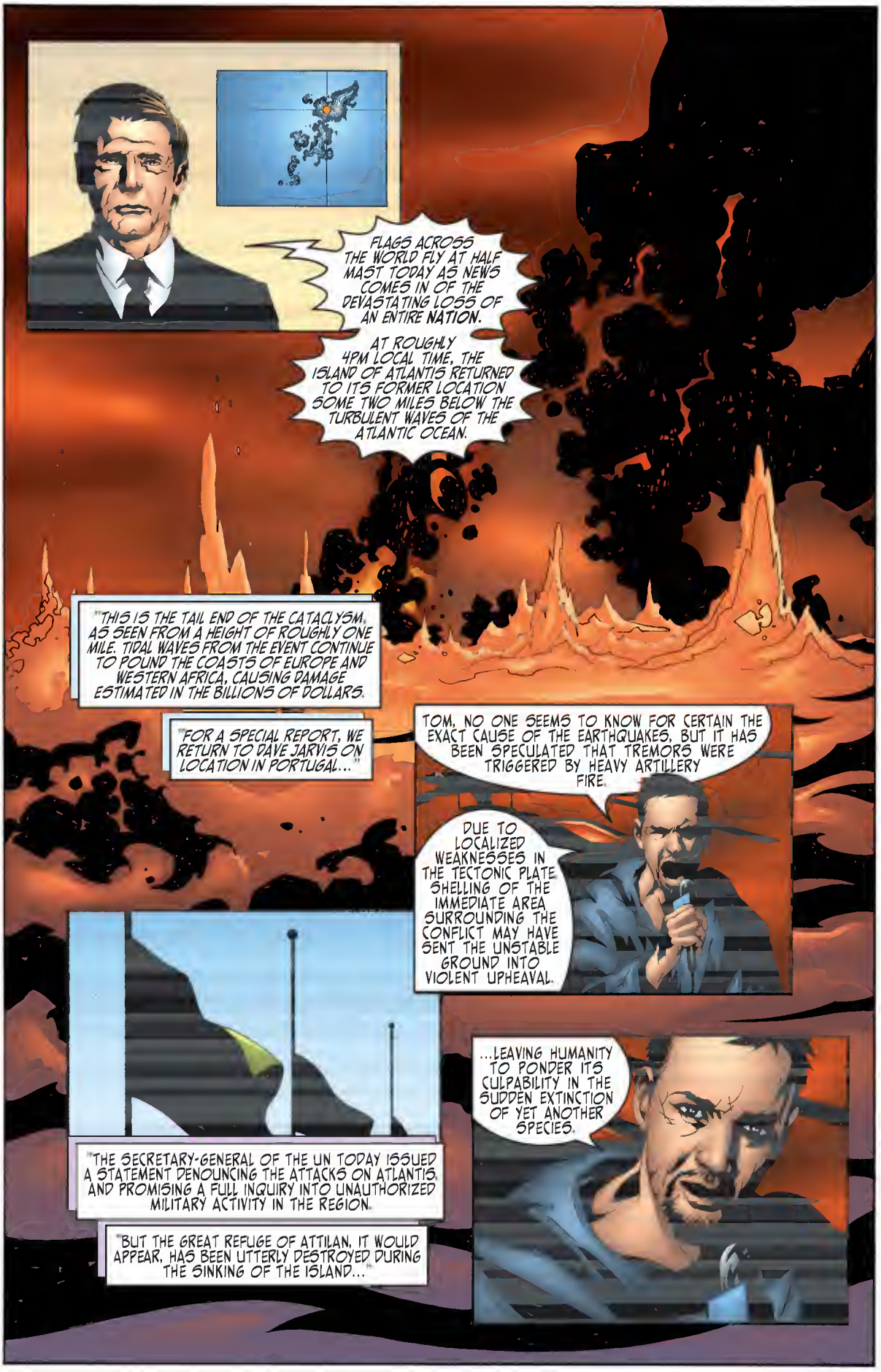

IMAGINE YOU HAD THE WHOLE WORLD IN YOUR GRASP...
...AND LOST IT.

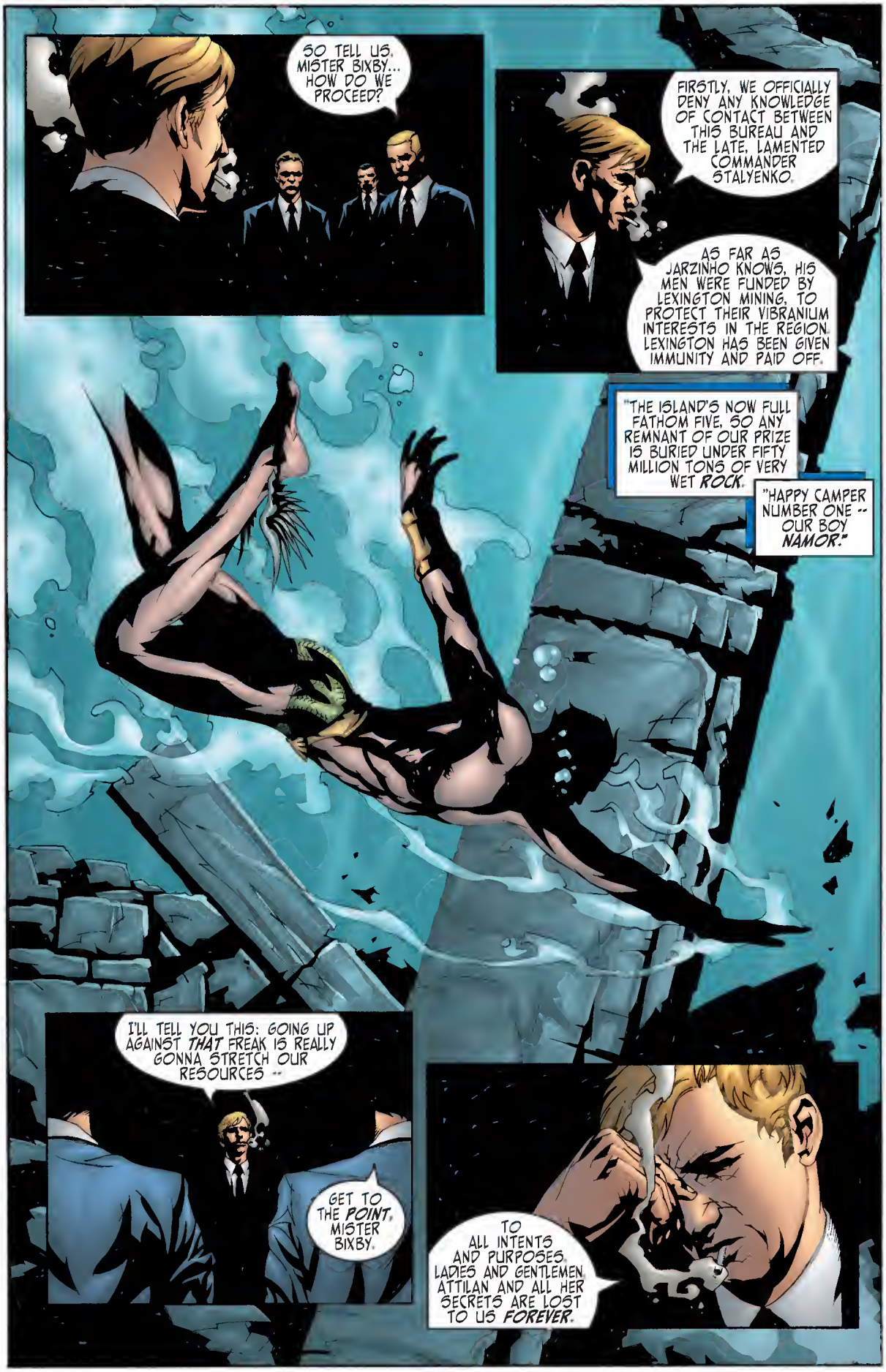

WHAT IF YOU WERE CRYSTAL, SISTER TO THE QUEEN, WITH THE FOUR ELEMENTS AT YOUR COMMAND?
WHAT IF YOU HAD THE POWER TO ELEVATE AN ENTIRE CITY ON A BED OF STONE, AS THE GROUND BENEATH IT WAS DISSOLVED BY MAGMA AND MOLTEN LAVA?
HOW LONG DO YOU THINK YOU COULD KEEP IT UP?
CENTRAL TERMINAL REPORTS EVERYONE'S INSIDE, MY LORD GORGON ...
YOU HAVE DONE WELL, AS EVER, MAJOR. YOUR RESOLUTE EFFICIENCY WILL BE RECOGNIZED. I ASSURE YOU OF THAT.
ASSUMING WE SURVIVE...


MAJESTY... I AWAIT YOUR ORDER...
IMAGINE YOU WERE JUST A DOG. HOW WOULD YOU KNOW WHAT WAS HAPPENING AROUND YOU?
HOW WOULD YOU UNDERSTAND THAT THE ENTIRE GRID OF COMPUTERIZED CITY FUNCTIONS HAD BEEN REROUTED INTO YOUR NEURAL NETWORK?
THAT AN ENERGY FIELD HAD BEEN CREATED, POWERFUL ENOUGH TO TELEPORT THE ENTIRE PLACE UPON REACTIVATION OF THE CITY'S PROTECTIVE DOME?
SO THAT ATTILAN ITSELF MIGHT HITCH A RIDE ON YOUR NEXT JOURNEY THROUGH NEGATIVE SPACE, JUST AS SOON AS YOUR FLIGHT REFLEX KICKED IN?
IF YOU WERE A DOG, WHY WOULD YOU CARE?
MAJESTY... PLEASE... YOUR ORDER?

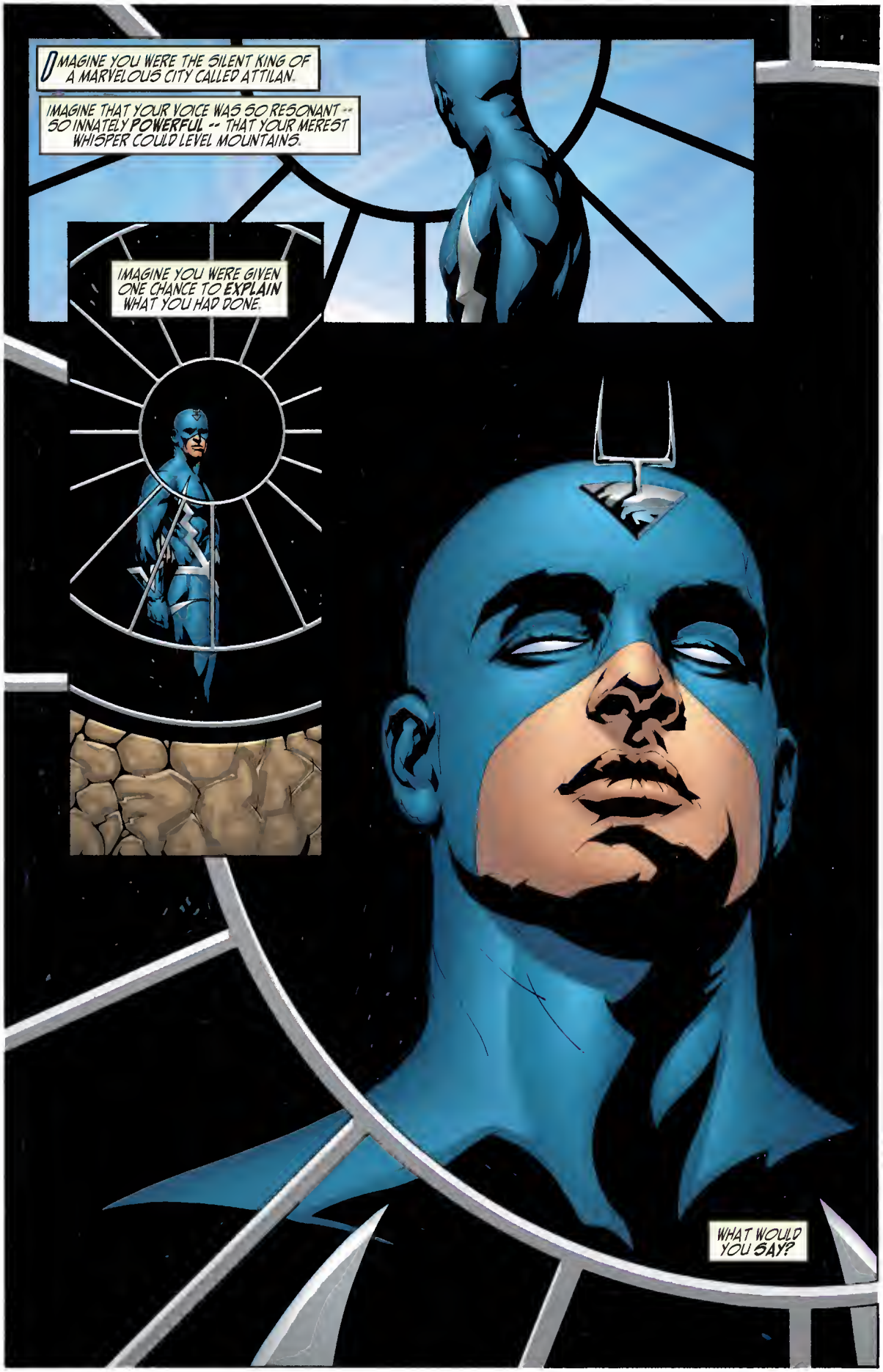

KRAKAKRAKAAKK
LOOK! THE DOME'S...IT'S
RE-FORMING--!
TK
ZZAT

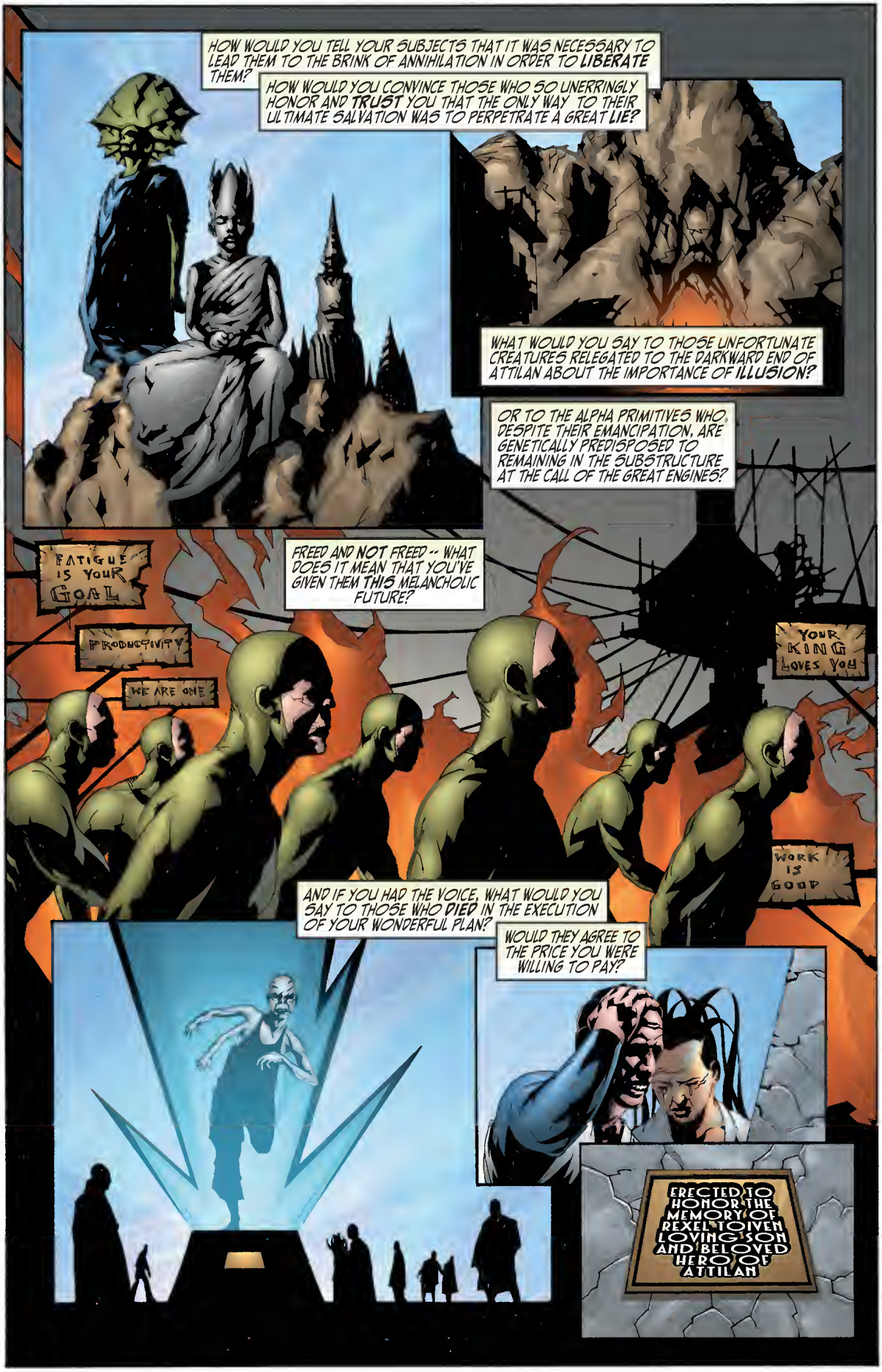

KRAKATOA


FLAGS ACROSS THE WORLD FLY AT HALF MAST TODAY AS NEWS COMES IN OF THE DEVASTATING LOSS OF AN ENTIRE NATION.
AT ROUGHLY 4PM LOCAL TIME, THE ISLAND OF ATLANTIS RETURNED TO ITS FORMER LOCATION SOME TWO MILES BELOW THE TURBULENT WAVES OF THE ATLANTIC OCEAN.
"THIS IS THE TAIL END OF THE CATACLYSM, AS SEEN FROM A HEIGHT OF ROUGHLY ONE MILE. TIDAL WAVES FROM THE EVENT CONTINUE TO POUND THE COASTS OF EUROPE AND WESTERN AFRICA, CAUSING DAMAGE ESTIMATED IN THE BILLIONS OF DOLLARS.
"FOR A SPECIAL REPORT, WE RETURN TO DAVE JARVIS ON LOCATION IN PORTUGAL..."
TOM, NO ONE SEEMS TO KNOW FOR CERTAIN THE EXACT CAUSE OF THE EARTHQUAKES, BUT IT HAS BEEN SPECULATED THAT TREMORS WERE TRIGGERED BY HEAVY ARTILLERY FIRE.
DUE TO LOCALIZED WEAKNESSES IN THE TECTONIC PLATE, SHELLING OF THE IMMEDIATE AREA SURROUNDING THE CONFLICT MAY HAVE SENT THE UNSTABLE GROUND INTO VIOLENT UPHEAVAL.
"THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE UN TODAY ISSUED A STATEMENT DENOUNCING THE ATTACKS ON ATLANTIS, AND PROMISING A FULL INQUIRY INTO UNAUTHORIZED MILITARY ACTIVITY IN THE REGION.
"BUT THE GREAT REFUGE OF ATTILAN, IT WOULD APPEAR, HAS BEEN UTTERLY DESTROYED DURING THE SINKING OF THE ISLAND...
...LEAVING HUMANITY TO PONDER ITS CULPABILITY IN THE SUDDEN EXTINCTION OF YET ANOTHER SPECIES.


SO TELL US, MISTER BIXBY... HOW DO WE PROCEED?
FIRSTLY, WE OFFICIALLY DENY ANY KNOWLEDGE OF CONTACT BETWEEN THIS BUREAU AND THE LATE, LAMENTED COMMANDER STALYENKO.
AS FAR AS JARZINHO KNOWS, HIS MEN WERE FUNDED BY LEXINGTON MINING, TO PROTECT THEIR VIBRANIUM INTERESTS IN THE REGION. LEXINGTON HAS BEEN GIVEN IMMUNITY AND PAID OFF.
"THE ISLAND'S NOW FULL FATHOM FIVE, SO ANY REMNANT OF OUR PRIZE IS BURIED UNDER FIFTY MILLION TONS OF VERY WET ROCK.
"HAPPY CAMPER NUMBER ONE -- OUR BOY NAMOR."
I'LL TELL YOU THIS: GOING UP AGAINST THAT FREAK IS REALLY GONNA STRETCH OUR RESOURCES --
GET TO THE POINT, MISTER BIXBY.
TO ALL INTENTS AND PURPOSES, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, ATTILAN AND ALL HER SECRETS ARE LOST TO US FOREVER.


(AH-IAAA...! TZENG DWOUH...!)
(AH-LAAA!)
(WHAT DOES THE OLD MAN SAY?)
(HE SAYS SOMETHING WONDERFUL HAS HAPPENED!
(HE SAYS THE GODS HAVE COME TO OUR HOLY MOUNTAIN.)


IMAGINE YOU WERE THE SILENT KING OF A MARVELOUS CITY CALLED ATTILAN.
IMAGINE THAT YOUR VOICE WAS SO RESONANT -- SO INNATELY POWERFUL -- THAT YOUR MEREST WHISPER COULD LEVEL MOUNTAINS.
IMAGINE YOU WERE GIVEN ONE CHANCE TO EXPLAIN WHAT YOU HAD DONE.
WHAT WOULD YOU SAY?


HOW WOULD YOU TELL YOUR SUBJECTS THAT IT WAS NECESSARY TO LEAD THEM TO THE BRINK OF ANNIHILATION IN ORDER TO LIBERATE THEM?
HOW WOULD YOU CONVINCE THOSE WHO SO UNERRINGLY HONOR AND TRUST YOU THAT THE ONLY WAY TO THEIR ULTIMATE SALVATION WAS TO PERPETRATE A GREAT LIE?
WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO THOSE UNFORTUNATE CREATURES RELEGATED TO THE DARKWARD END OF ATTILAN ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF ILLUSION?
OR TO THE ALPHA PRIMITIVES WHO, DESPITE THEIR EMANCIPATION, ARE GENETICALLY PREDISPOSED TO REMAINING IN THE SUBSTRUCTURE AT THE CALL OF THE GREAT ENGINES?
FREED AND NOT FREED -- WHAT DOES IT MEAN THAT YOU'VE GIVEN THEM THIS MELANCHOLIC FUTURE?
FATIGUE IS YOUR GOAL
PRODUCTIVITY
WE ARE ONE
YOUR KING LOVES YOU
WORK IS GOOD
AND IF YOU HAD THE VOICE, WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO THOSE WHO DIED IN THE EXECUTION OF YOUR WONDERFUL PLAN?
WOULD THEY AGREE TO THE PRICE YOU WERE WILLING TO PAY?
ERECTED TO HONOR THE MEMORY OF REXEL TOIVEN LOVING SON AND BELOVED HERO OF ATTILAN


WHAT OF THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN SUMMARILY FORCED TO CAST AWAY ANY RECENT MEMORY OF CHILDHOOD -- NEIFI AND NAHREES, DINU, TONAJA AND KALIKYA?
OR THE BOY CALLED DEWOZ -- A PAWN IN A HIGH STAKES GAME OF INHUMAN CHESS? WAS HIS FREEDOM WORTH THE PRICE OF HIS SOUL?
...I WAS THINKING... MAYBE WHEN I GET WELL...
...MAYBE WE COULD ALL GO OUT TO THE PARK AN' SCARE UP SOME OF THE NEW KIDS...
...MAYBE WE COULD ALL GO TOGETHER --


IMAGINE YOU HAD THE POWER TO DECIDE THE FATE OF A SPECIES: THAT WOULD BE REAL POWER. WOULD YOU WANT IT?
WOULD YOUR NEAR-GODLIKE STATUS GIVE YOU THE RIGHT TO BE VENGEFUL TOWARDS THOSE WHO HAD COMMITTED CRIMES AGAINST YOU? COULD YOU TEMPER YOUR PUNISHMENTS WITH MERCY?
IMAGINE YOUR DESTINY IRREVOCABLY LINKED TO A MAN YOU BOTH LOVE AND DESPISE -- A DREAMER OF IMPOSSIBLE DREAMS, A MASTER MANIPULATOR OF THE MIND.
HOW DO YOU ACKNOWLEDGE TO YOUR BROTHER, MAXIMUS, THAT FOR ONCE, YOU MANIPULATED HIM?
IMAGINE THAT YOU COULD TELL HUMANITY THE TRUTH -- THAT YOU COULD HAVE ANNIHILATED THEM IN AN INSTANT, BUT YOU HAD TO GIVE THEM THE ILLUSION THEY WERE WINNING...
...SO THAT THEY'D BELIEVE THEY HAD DESTROYED YOU, AND NEVER COME LOOKING FOR YOUR CITY AGAIN.


WHAT DO YOU SAY TO YOUR COUSIN, GORGON, TO EXPLAIN WHY YOU COULD NOT ENTRUST HIM WITH THIS VITAL SECRET? YOU HAD HIM LEAD HIS TROOPS INTO A POINTLESS BATTLE, AND THUS PERPETUATE THE ILLUSION.
WILL HE EVER UNDERSTAND THAT ULTIMATELY, IT WAS NOT THE SALVATION OF HIS PRIDE THAT COUNTED, SO MUCH AS THE SALVATION OF AN ENTIRE SPECIES?
WILL HE EVER TRUST YOU AGAIN?
FOR THAT MATTER, WILL TRITON?
OR CRYSTAL...HOW DOES SHE REALLY FEEL THAT YOU TOOK SUCH A CHANCE WITH THE SAFETY OF HER CHILD?
AND WHAT CAN YOU SAY TO YOUR WIFE, MEDUSA -- THE WOMAN WITH WHOM YOU SHARE SO MUCH? WILL SHE EVER TRULY UNDERSTAND THE INTENSITY OF THE FEELINGS YOU HAVE FOR HER...
...WHILE AT THE SAME TIME UNDERSTANDING WHY THE WEIGHT OF YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES --
-- FORCES YOU TO REMAIN ALONE?


IMAGINE THAT YOU HAD ALL THESE LIVES IN YOUR HANDS; THAT EACH AND EVERY TIME YOU WOKE TO A NEW DAY, YOU HAD TO BE PREPARED TO MAKE SIMILAR DECISIONS ALL OVER AGAIN.
IMAGINE THAT YOU COULD SAVE A FAMILY BY SACRIFICING A CHILD...
...BUT THAT YOU HAD TO EXPLAIN IT TO THE CHILD.
WHAT WOULD YOU SAY?
FIN


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WHY DO YOU KILL THEM?
UHH...?
BAD PEOPLE I MEAN
I HATE THEM.


OH.


I THOUGHT IT MIGHT BE BECAUSE YOU WANTED TO MAKE THE WORLD SAFE FOR GOOD PEOPLE.



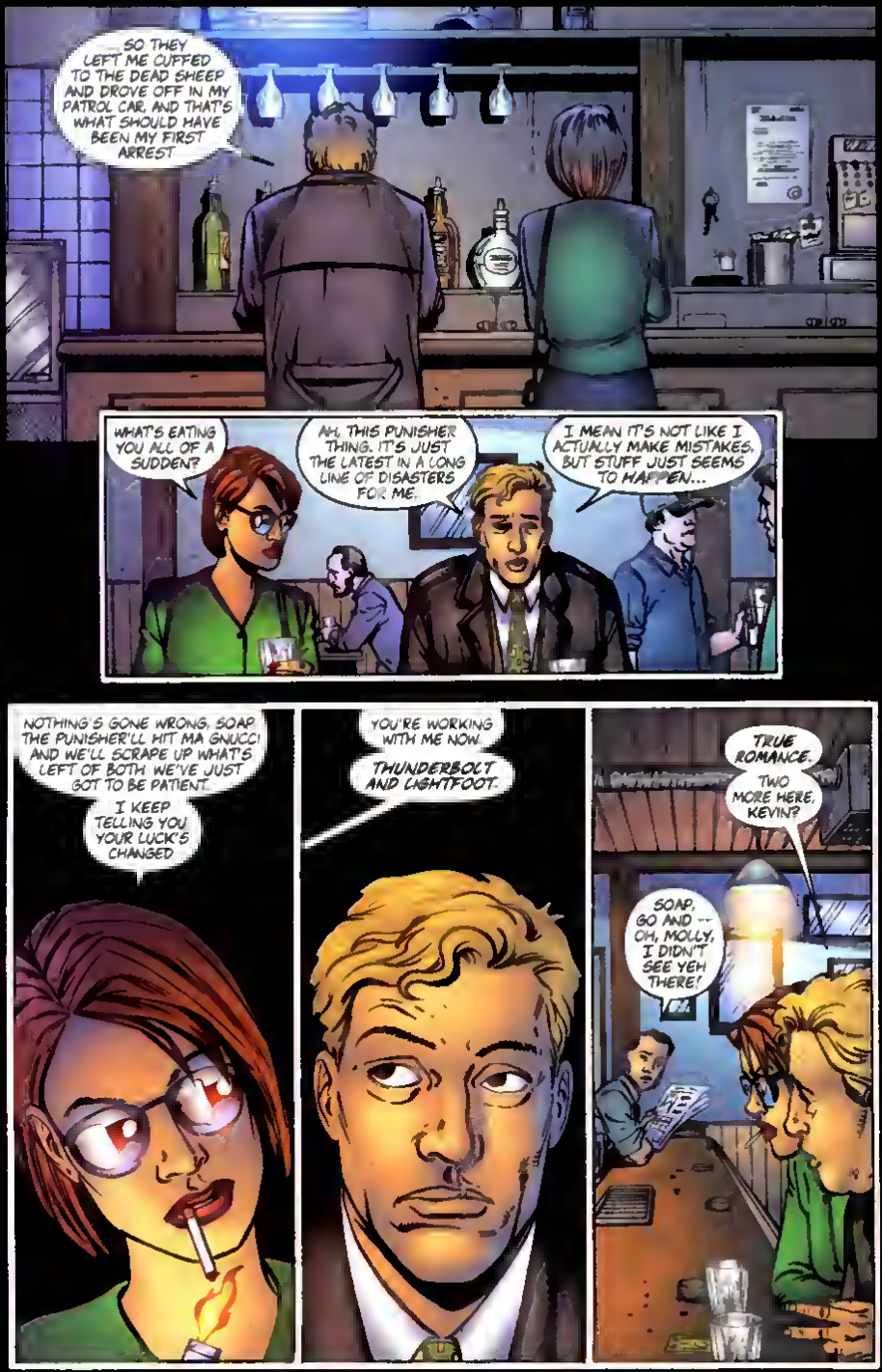
STAN LEE PRESENTS:

DESPERATE MEASURES

GARTH ENNIS STORY STEVE DILLON PENCILS JIMMY PALMIOTTI INKS
CHRIS SOTOMAYOR COLORS RICHARD STARKINGS & COMICRAFT'S WES ABBOTT LETTERS
KELLY LAMY ASSISTANT EDITOR NANCI DAKESIAN EDITOR JOE QUESADA EDITOR and CHIEF

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YOU'VE FOUND HIM?
AH, NOT YET, MA. BUT WE GOT A GUY KNOWS HIM.
HE KNOWS THE PUNISHER? CAN HE HELP YOU?
OH YES, MA.
HE'S JUST ABOUT TO START...
ULP!
HMMM...
YOU, LACKEY. LOOK IN MY ADDRESS BOOK AND TRY EVERY NUMBER YOU CAN FIND FOR THE RUSSIAN.
YES, MA.
UNDER IT...


...SO THEY LEFT ME CUFFED TO THE DEAD SHEEP AND DROVE OFF IN MY PATROL CAR. AND THAT'S WHAT SHOULD HAVE BEEN MY FIRST ARREST.
WHAT'S EATING YOU ALL OF A SUDDEN?
AH, THIS PUNISHER THING. IT'S JUST THE LATEST IN A LONG LINE OF DISASTERS FOR ME.
I MEAN IT'S NOT LIKE I ACTUALLY MAKE MISTAKES, BUT STUFF JUST SEEMS TO HAPPEN...
NOTHING'S GONE WRONG, SOAP. THE PUNISHER'LL HIT MA GNUCCI AND WE'LL SCRAPE UP WHAT'S LEFT OF BOTH. WE'VE JUST GOT TO BE PATIENT.
I KEEP TELLING YOU, YOUR LUCK'S CHANGED.
YOU'RE WORKING WITH ME NOW.
THUNDERBOLT AND LIGHTFOOT.
TRUE ROMANCE.
TWO MORE HERE, KEVIN?
SOAP, GO AND -- OH, MOLLY, I DIDN'T SEE YEH THERE!

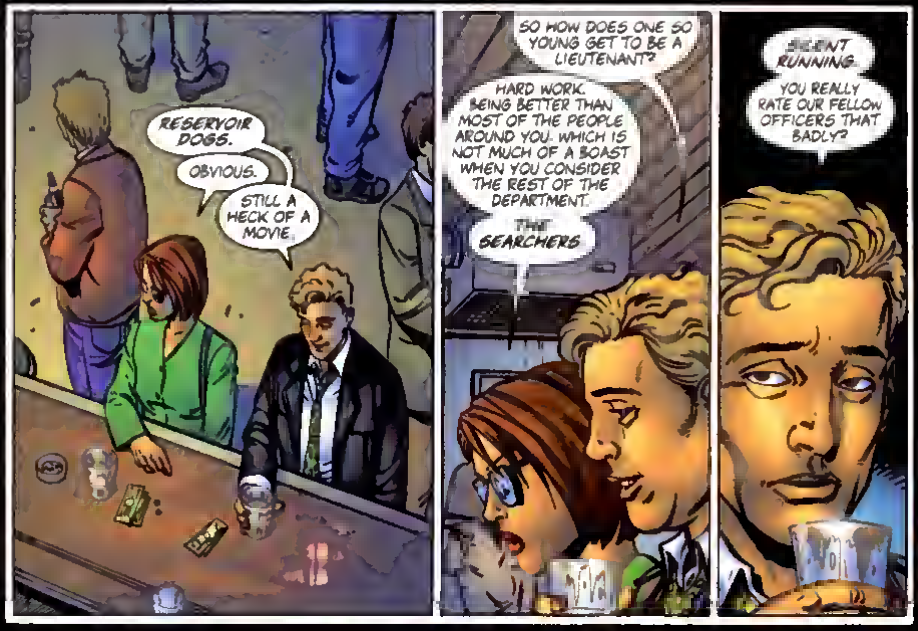

HOW'RE YEH ANYWAY, MOLLY? STILL HANGIN AROUND W' THIS LOSER, ARE YEH?
DETECTIVE SOAP AND I ARE WORKING ON A CASE, KEVIN
TELL US THIS, DO YEH LIKE INDIAN FOOD?
EXIT
NO
'CAUSE THERE'S A GREAT --
OH.
WELL, IF THERE'S ANYTHING I CAN GET FOR YEH, MOLLY, JUST LET ME KNOW...
THANK YOU, KEVIN.
ENTER THE DRAGON.
NEAR DARK.
NOT YOUR TYPE, HUH?
DEFINITELY NOT.
THE KILLER.

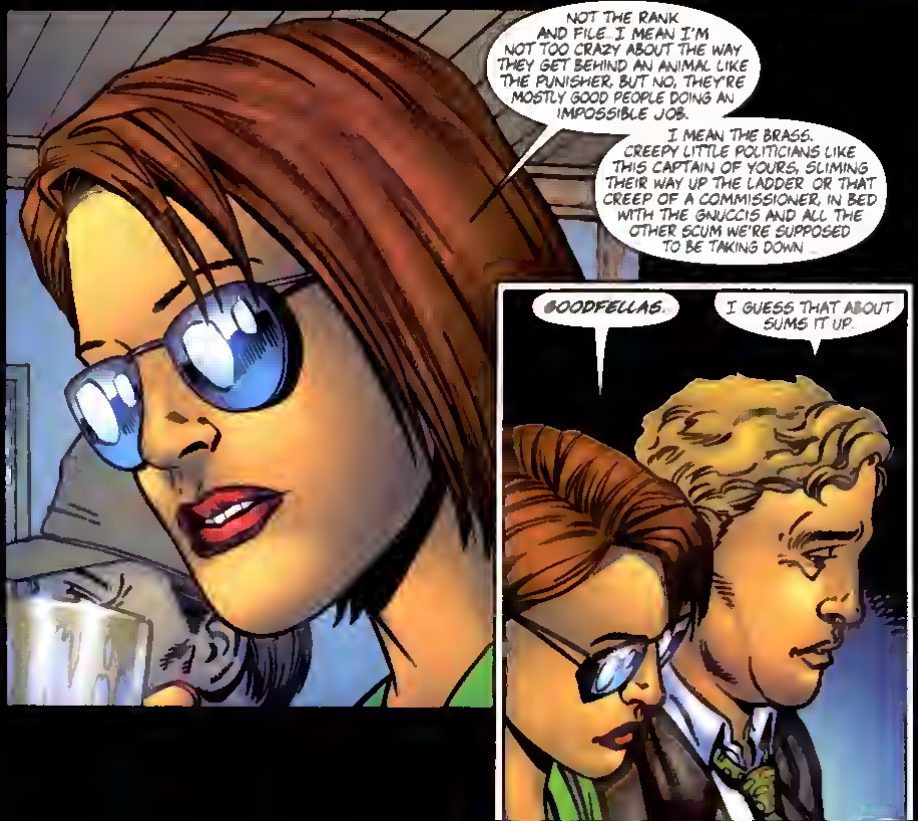

DAVE'S SCREAMING.
UH?
IT STARTED A WHILE AGO SOMEBODY'S DOING SOMETHING TO HIM IN HIS APARTMENT.
AAAAAAHH
HELP ME UP.
LIGHTNING STRIKES MY CHEST.
CRACKLES DOWN MY RIBS. FRIES MY HEART LIKE BURGER MEAT.
ALL THIS PAIN AND I'M NOT EVEN ON MY FEET
THEN IT SETTLES TO A STEADY AGONY
WHY WAIT FOR DEATH TO COME TO ME?
EEEIIGGGHH!

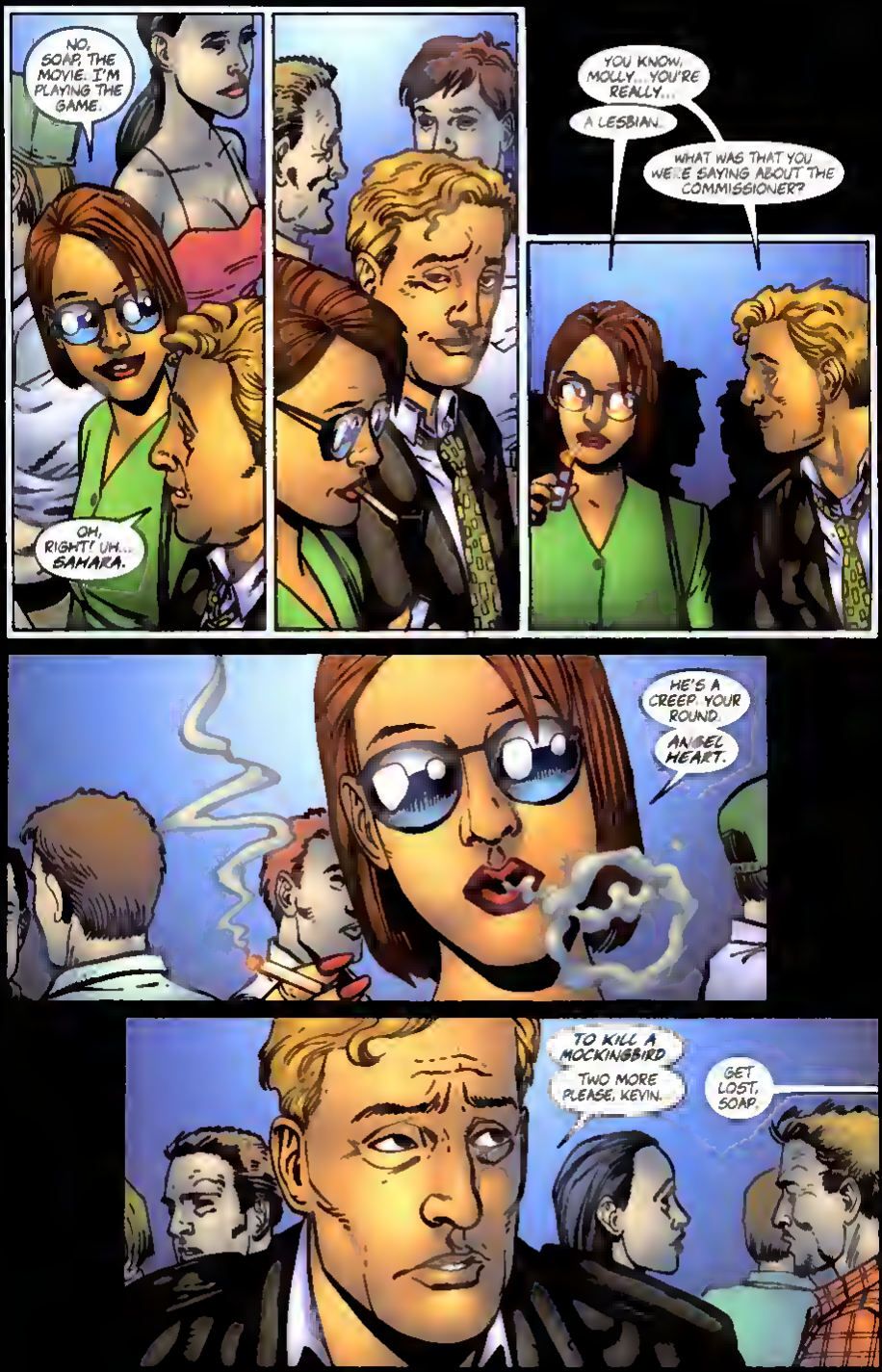

YOU READY TO TALK YET, FREAKSHOW? YOU WANNA TELL ME WHERE THE PUNISHER IS WHILE YOU STILL GOT A FACE?
DROP DEAAAAAAGGHH!
THAT THE DOOR?
STAY BACK.
NO TIME TO FIND A GUN. DYING ON MY FEET HERE.
NOW OR NEVER
WHO'S --

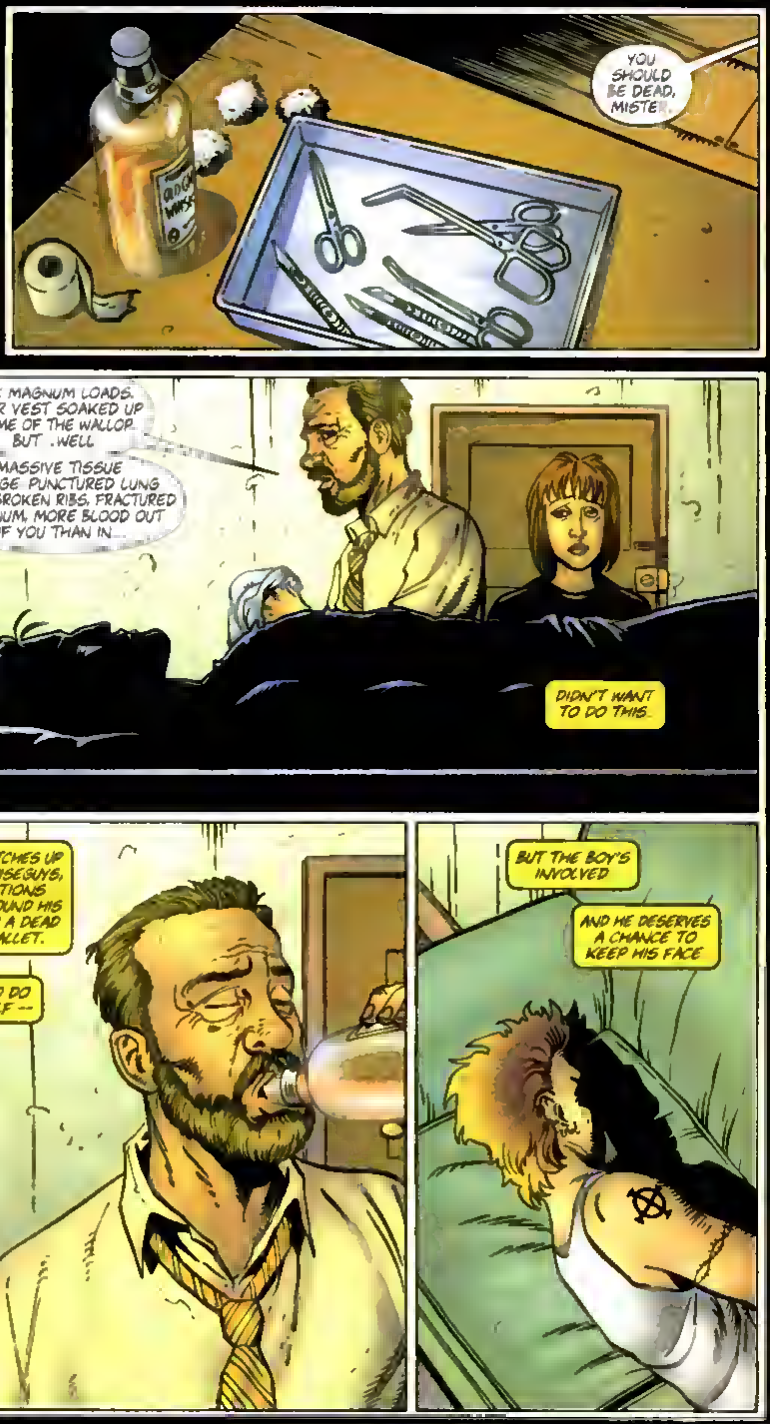

WHERE IS HE, YOU LITTLE MAGGOT?
WHERE'S THE PUNISHER?!
N...N... NEVER...!
HOLY --!
WAUMPP
UHHH...
I DON'T BELIEVE THIS..!
PUNISHER! THE PUNISHER!
ALL MINE --
SNIK


WHUHH
BALLISTIC KNIFE.
SPRING-LOADED.
OLD FAVORITE OF MINE.
JOAN...?
OH DEAR
M-M-MR. SMITH --!
UHH...!
L-LOOK AT DAVE! LOOK WHAT THEY'VE DONE TO HIM!
THEY'VE -- THEY'VE --
THEY'VE PULLED HIS RINGS OUT.


RESERVOIR DOGS.
OBVIOUS.
STILL A HECK OF A MOVIE.
SO HOW DOES ONE SO YOUNG GET TO BE A LIEUTENANT?
HARD WORK. BEING BETTER THAN MOST OF THE PEOPLE AROUND YOU. WHICH IS NOT MUCH OF A BOAST WHEN YOU CONSIDER THE REST OF THE DEPARTMENT.
THE SEARCHERS
SILENT RUNNING.
YOU REALLY RATE OUR FELLOW OFFICERS THAT BADLY?


NOT THE RANK AND FILE. I MEAN I'M NOT TOO CRAZY ABOUT THE WAY THEY GET BEHIND AN ANIMAL LIKE THE PUNISHER, BUT NO, THEY'RE MOSTLY GOOD PEOPLE DOING AN IMPOSSIBLE JOB.
I MEAN THE BRASS. CREEPY LITTLE POLITICIANS LIKE THIS CAPTAIN OF YOURS, SLIMING THEIR WAY UP THE LADDER OR THAT CREEP OF A COMMISSIONER, IN BED WITH THE GNUCCIS AND ALL THE OTHER SCUM WE'RE SUPPOSED TO BE TAKING DOWN...
GOODFELLAS.
I GUESS THAT ABOUT SUMS IT UP.


NO, SOAP. THE MOVIE. I'M PLAYING THE GAME.
OH, RIGHT! UH... SAHARA.
YOU KNOW, MOLLY... YOU'RE REALLY...
A LESBIAN.
WHAT WAS THAT YOU WERE SAYING ABOUT THE COMMISSIONER?
HE'S A CREEP. YOUR ROUND.
ANGEL HEART.
TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD
TWO MORE PLEASE, KEVIN.
GET LOST, SOAP.

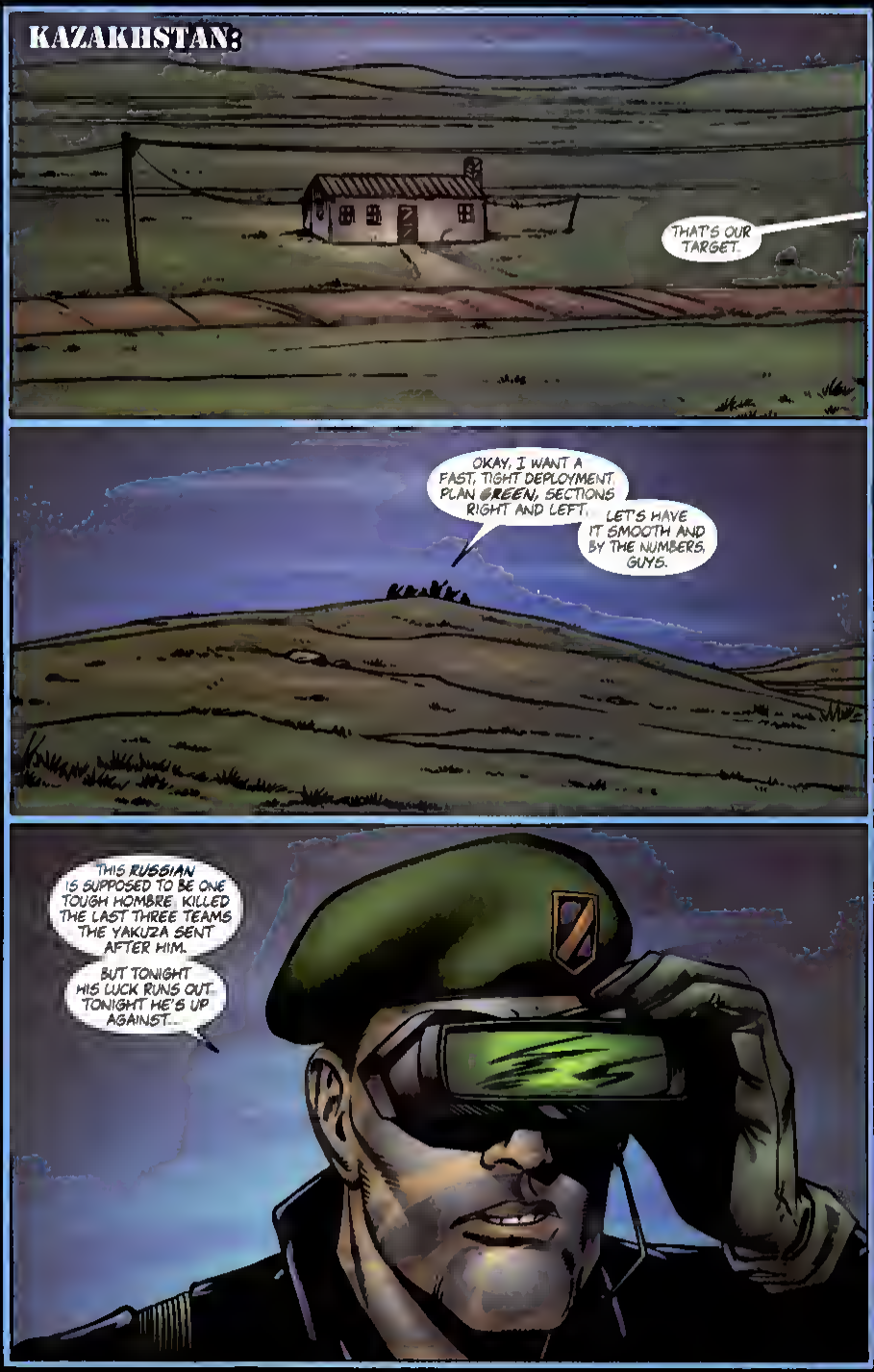

YOU SHOULD BE DEAD, MISTER.
SIX MAGNUM LOADS. YOUR VEST SOAKED UP SOME OF THE WALLOP. BUT .WELL
MASSIVE TISSUE DAMAGE. PUNCTURED LUNG. THREE BROKEN RIBS. FRACTURED STERNUM. MORE BLOOD OUT OF YOU THAN IN...
DIDN'T WANT TO DO THIS.
THE DOC PATCHES UP WOUNDED WISEGUYS, NO QUESTIONS ASKED. I FOUND HIS NUMBER IN A DEAD MAN'S WALLET.
WANTED TO DO THIS MYSELF --
BUT THE BOY'S INVOLVED
AND HE DESERVES A CHANCE TO KEEP HIS FACE


THERE ARE BETTER DOCTORS, MORE SOBER ONES BUT EVERY SINGLE ONE OF THEM WOULD BE STRAIGHT ON THE PHONE TO THE GNUCCIS
THIS OLD BUZZARD --
HE'S OLD SCHOOL.
...RIGHT, THEN. TIME TO START DIGGING.
ANESTHETIC?
I DON'T.
DIG AWAY.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT IT IS KEEPS YOU GOING MISTER
BUT YOU'D BETTER PRAY YOU HAVE A LITTLE OF IT LEFT

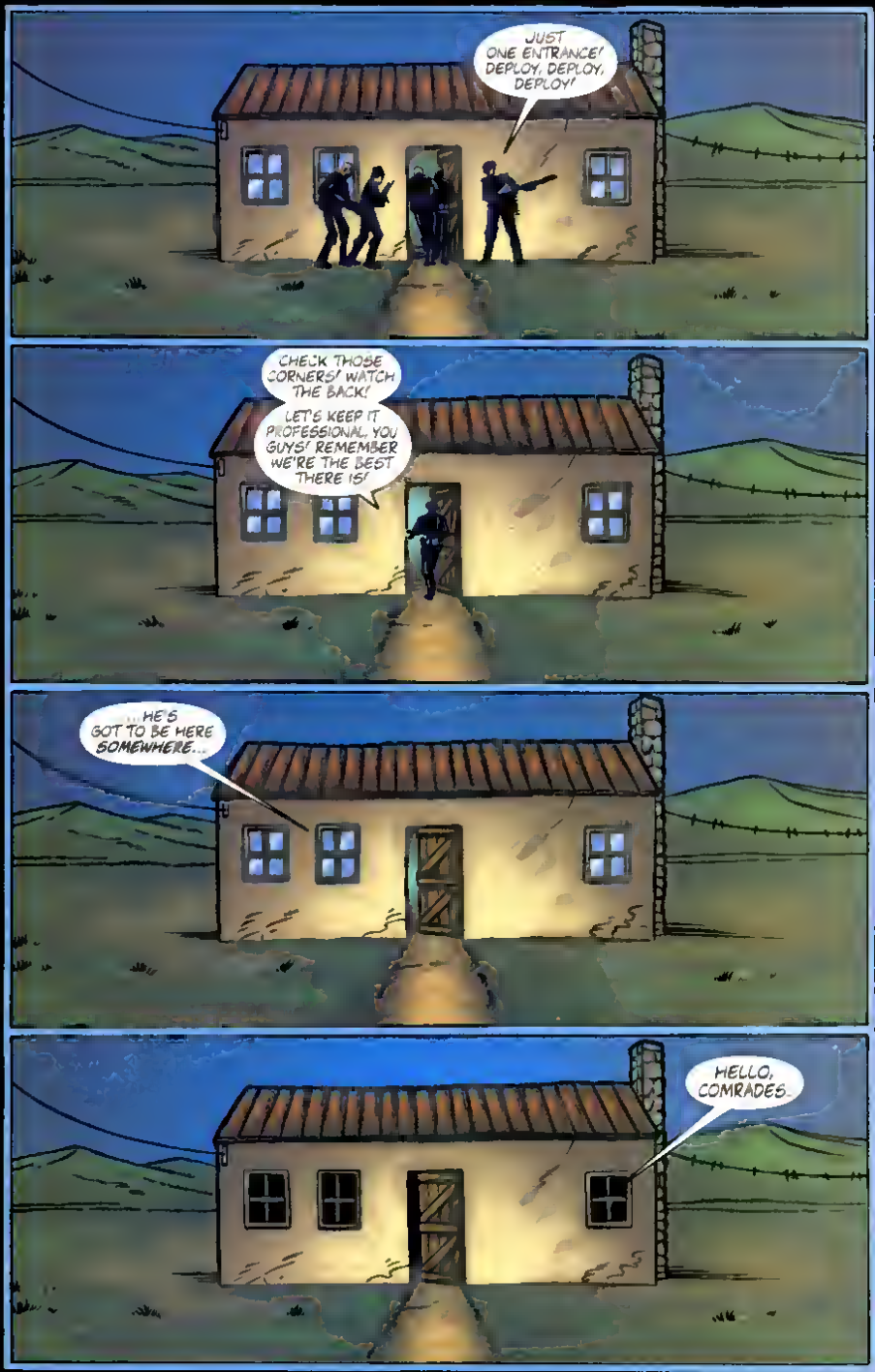

I DO
A LIFETIME'S WORTH.

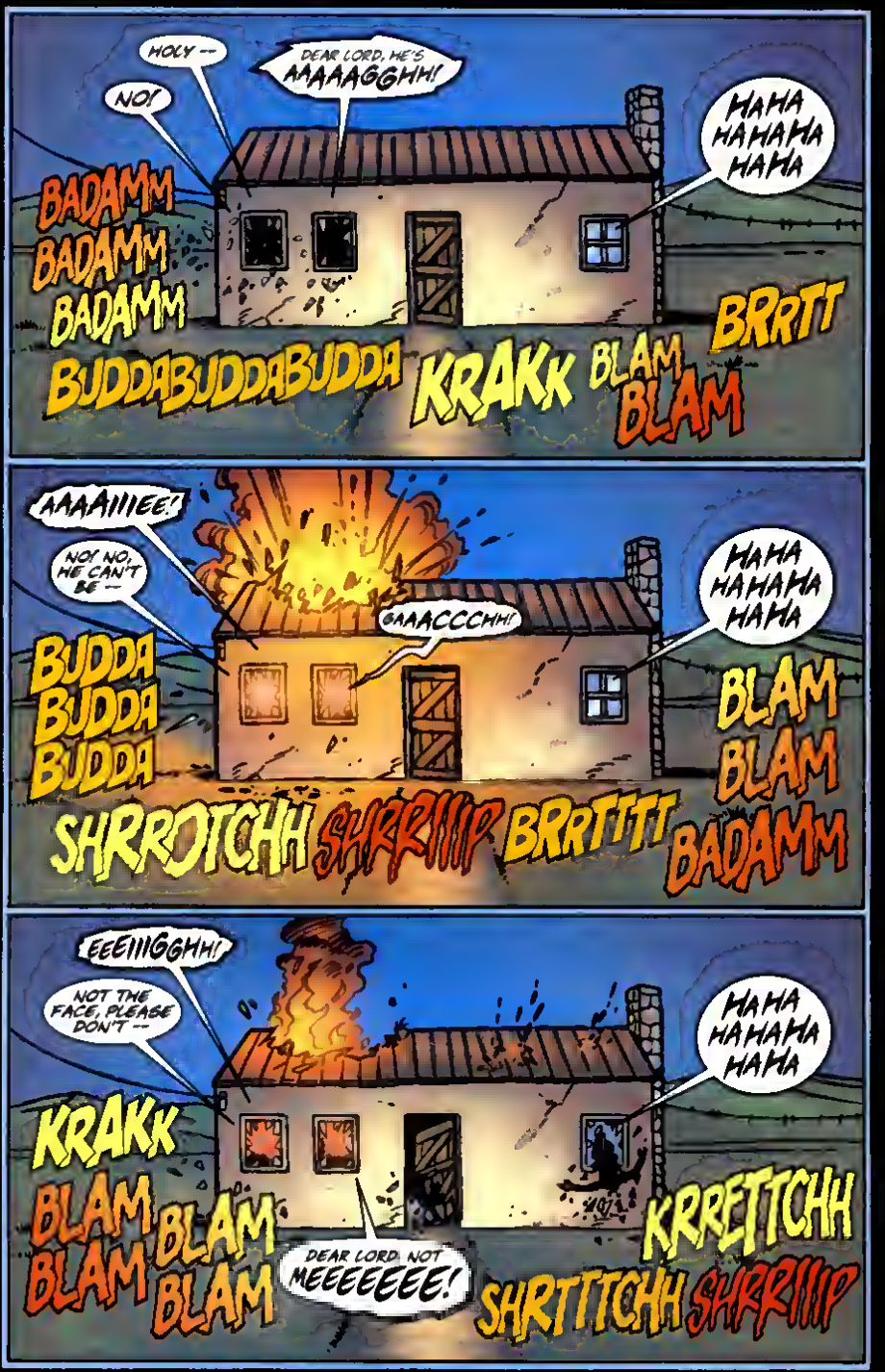

BY THE TIME HE'S DONE I'VE PASSED OUT HALF A DOZEN TIMES, THE BULLET IS ALMOST BITTEN THROUGH, AND I'M HOLDING THE FORTY-FIVE SO TIGHT THE BARREL'S DRIPPING BLOOD
THE BOY WILL BE FINE.
FOUR THOUSAND?
THAT'S WHAT WE AGREED ON.
JOAN.
UM... YES?
MONEY'S IN A BAG AT THE BACK OF THE REFRIGERATOR GIVE HIM TEN THOUSAND
FOR KEEPING YOUR MOUTH SHUT.
NO. SON.
FOR BUYING WHISKEY.


THEN HE'S GONE.
NEXT TWENTY-FOUR HOURS WILL DECIDE IT. HEAL OR BLEED OUT. LIVE OR DIE.
AS SOON AS DAVE CAN WALK, MOVE HIM BACK TO HIS APARTMENT
YES, MR SMITH
JOAN?
YES, MR SMITH?
WHAT THE HELL.
MY NAME IS FRANK.
YES, FRANK


KAZAKHSTAN:
THAT'S OUR TARGET.
OKAY, I WANT A FAST, TIGHT DEPLOYMENT. PLAN GREEN, SECTIONS RIGHT AND LEFT.
LET'S HAVE IT SMOOTH AND BY THE NUMBERS, GUYS.
THIS RUSSIAN IS SUPPOSED TO BE ONE TOUGH HOMBRE. KILLED THE LAST THREE TEAMS THE YAKUZA SENT AFTER HIM.
BUT TONIGHT HIS LUCK RUNS OUT. TONIGHT HE'S UP AGAINST...


BRAVO FORCE!
LET'S GO!


JUST ONE ENTRANCE! DEPLOY, DEPLOY, DEPLOY!
CHECK THOSE CORNERS! WATCH THE BACK!
LET'S KEEP IT PROFESSIONAL, YOU GUYS! REMEMBER WE'RE THE BEST THERE IS!
...HE'S GOT TO BE HERE SOMEWHERE...
HELLO, COMRADES.


HOLY --
NO!
DEAR LORD, HE'S AAAAAGGHH!
HAHA HAHAHA HAHA
BADAMM BADAMM BADAMM
BUDDABUDDABUDDA
KRAKK
BLAM BLAM
BRRTT
AAAAIIIEE!
NO! NO, HE CAN'T BE --
GAAACCCHH!
HAHA HAHAHA HAHA
BUDDA BUDDA BUDDA
SHRROTCHH
SHRRIIIP
BRRTTTT
BLAM BLAM
BADAMM
EEEIIIGGHH!
NOT THE FACE, PLEASE DON'T --
HAHA HAHAHA HAHA
KRAKK
BLAM BLAM BLAM BLAM
DEAR LORD, NOT MEEEEEEE!
KRRETTCHH
SHRTTTCHH
SHRRIIIP

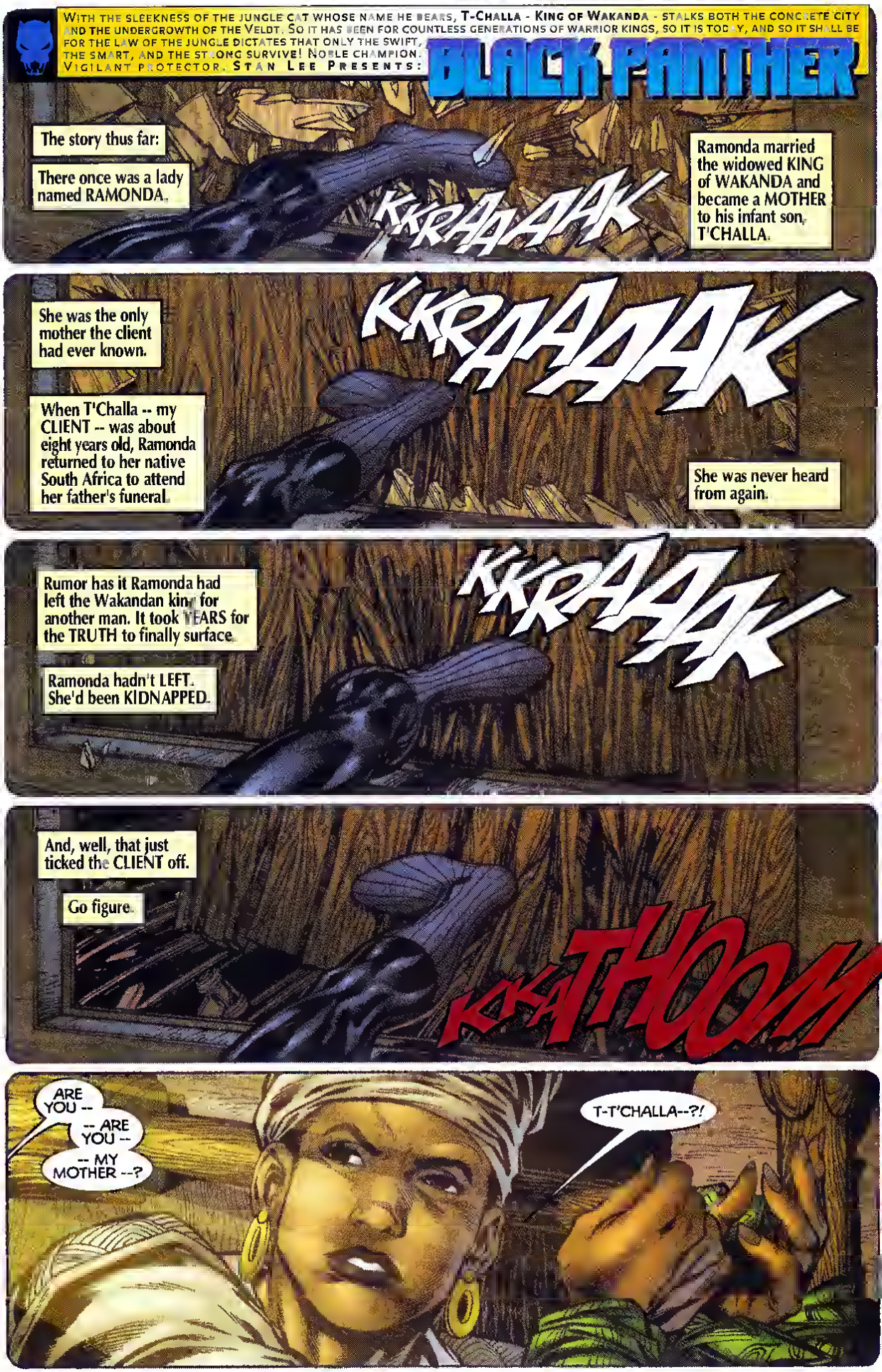

OH NO. OH PLEASE, NO...
CRAWL BACK TO YOUR MASTERS, LITTLE MAN. TELL THEM MY PATIENCE RUNS THIN. ONE MORE OF THESE STUPID ATTEMPTS ON MY LIFE --
AND THE RUSSIAN WILL COME FOR THEM.
NOW GO!
HAAGSH!
I WANT MY MOMMEEEE. !


BREET-BREET
BREET-BREET
KLICK
HA HAHA HMMM?
HELLO? MA? MA GNUCCI?!


HOW ARE YOU, MA? THE RUSSIAN THINKS OF YOU OFTEN WHAT? YOU DO?
FOR YOU MA -- ANYTHING. I WILL BE ON THE VERY NEXT PLANE
DOSSVIDANJA!


HAHA HAHAHA HAHA...!
TO BE CONTINUED


MARVEL
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WITH THE SLEEKNESS OF THE JUNGLE CAT WHOSE NAME HE BEARS, T-CHALLA - KING OF WAKANDA - STALKS BOTH THE CONCRETE CITY AND THE UNDERGROWTH OF THE VELDT. SO IT HAS BEEN FOR COUNTLESS GENERATIONS OF WARRIOR KINGS, SO IT IS TODAY, AND SO IT SHALL BE FOR THE LAW OF THE JUNGLE DICTATES THAT ONLY THE SWIFT, THE SMART, AND THE STRONG SURVIVE! NOBLE CHAMPION. VIGILANT PROTECTOR. STAN LEE PRESENTS:
BLACK PANTHER
The story thus far:
There once was a lady named RAMONDA.
KKRAAAAK
Ramonda married the widowed KING of WAKANDA and became a MOTHER to his infant son, T'CHALLA.
She was the only mother the client had ever known.
When T'Challa -- my CLIENT -- was about eight years old, Ramonda returned to her native South Africa to attend her father's funeral.
KKRAAAAK
She was never heard from again.
Rumor has it Ramonda had left the Wakandan king for another man. It took YEARS for the TRUTH to finally surface.
Ramonda hadn't LEFT. She'd been KIDNAPPED.
KKRAAAAK
And, well, that just ticked the CLIENT off.
Go figure.
KKATHOOM
ARE YOU --
-- ARE YOU --
-- MY MOTHER --?
T-T'CHALLA--?!



A powerful politician named ANTON PRETORIUS fell in love -- well, maybe fell in OBSESSION -- with Ramonda and KIDNAPPED her, keeping her, and his feelings for her, HIDDEN from the formerly racist government he served. Ramonda was locked up in Pretorius' Johannesburg estate for more than a decade.

Pretorius sent compromising photos of Ramonda to the Wakandan king to convince him she'd run off with another man. And, hey, a white guy at that.

The client did not learn much about his mother while he was growing up. His father, the king, never spoke of her.

Ever since her rescue, she and the client have been inseparable. They were all the family they had.

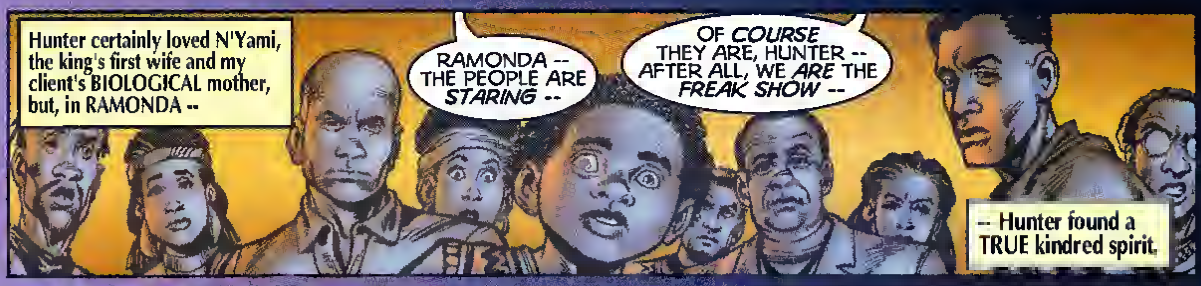
CAPTAIN REWIND

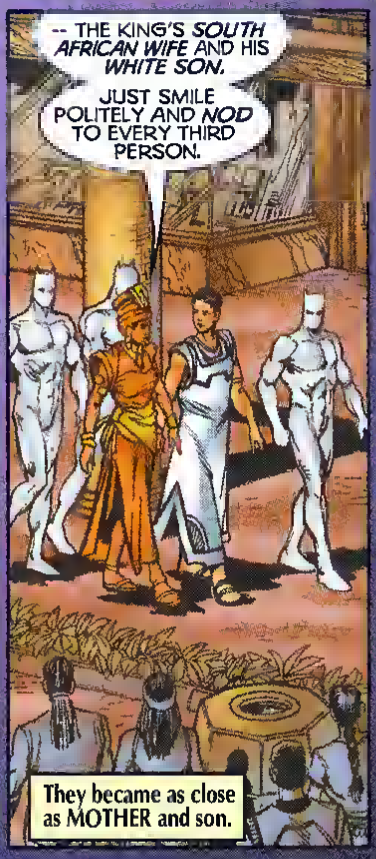


THE OTHER SON

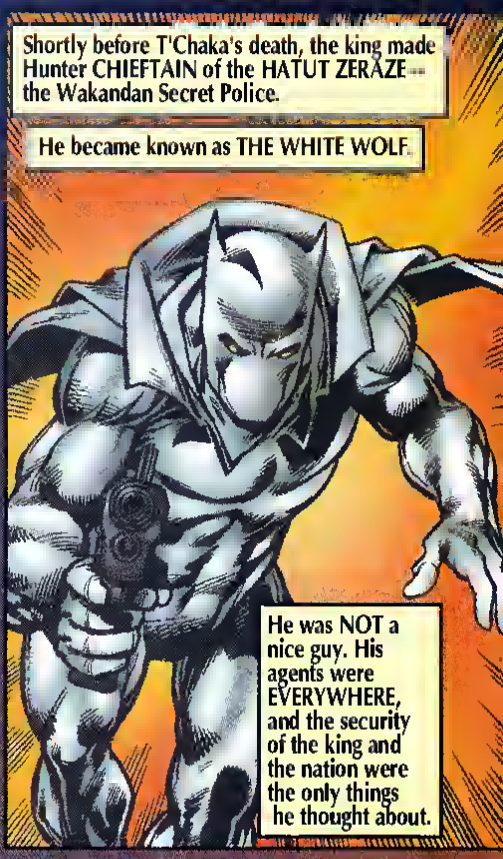


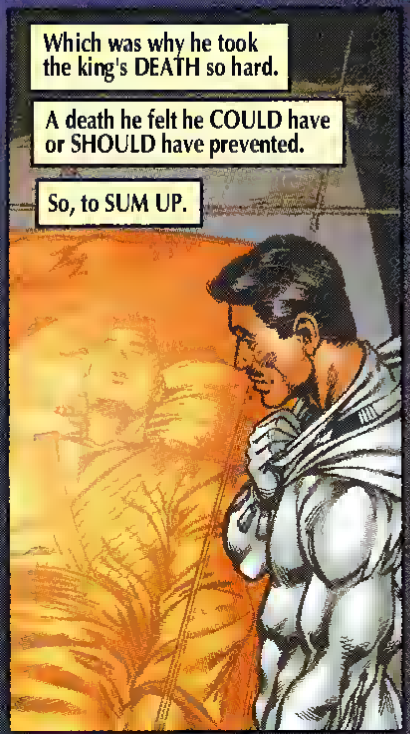
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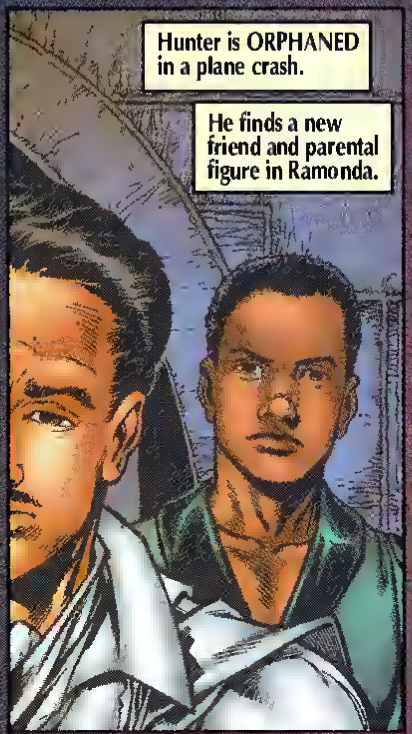

Hunter certainly loved N'Yami, the king's first wife and my client's BIOLOGICAL mother, but, in RAMONDA --
RAMONDA -- THE PEOPLE ARE STARING --
OF COURSE THEY ARE, HUNTER -- AFTER ALL, WE ARE THE FREAK SHOW --
-- Hunter found a TRUE kindred spirit.

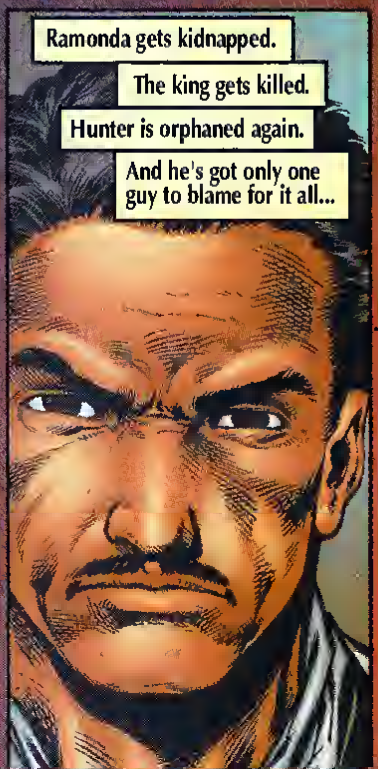

-- THE KING'S SOUTH AFRICAN WIFE AND HIS WHITE SON.
JUST SMILE POLITELY AND NOD TO EVERY THIRD PERSON.
They became as close as MOTHER and son.


And then, one day, she was GONE.


Shortly before T'Chaka's death, the king made Hunter CHIEFTAIN of the HATUT ZERAZE -- the Wakandan Secret Police.
He became known as THE WHITE WOLF.
He was NOT a nice guy. His agents were EVERYWHERE, and the security of the king and the nation were the only things he thought about.


Which was why he took the king's DEATH so hard.
A death he felt he COULD have or SHOULD have prevented.
So, to SUM UP.


Hunter is ORPHANED in a plane crash.
He finds a new friend and parental figure in Ramonda.


Ramonda gets kidnapped.
The king gets killed.
Hunter is orphaned again.
And he's got only one guy to blame for it all...



STAN LEE PRESENTS: THE BLACK PANTHER

ENEMY OF THE STATE

CONCLUSION

THE TAKING OF WAKANDA 1-2-3

CHRISTOPHER PRIEST STORY MARK BRIGHT ART

NELSON DECASTRO INKS

CHRIS SOTOMAYOR COLORS

RS AND COMICRAFT'S LIZ AGRAPHIOTIS LETTERS

NANCI DAKESIAN MANAGING EDITOR

JOE QUESADA AND JIMMY PALMIOTTI HEAD-HITTERS

BOB HARRAS CHIEF

LONG LIVE THE KING




-- OR IF YOU SHOULD HAVE BEEN COMING TO SAVE ME.
IT WAS PRETTY TOUCH-AND-GO FOR A MINUTE.
FASCINATING, CAPTAIN.
LET'S GET SOME NICE BISCUITS, AND YOU CAN TELL ME ALL ABOUT IT...
MY THOUGHTS EXACTLY.
KRACKK
HEY -- MAJOR VICTORY -- HAVE YOU LOST IT?!?
WHO ARE YOU?
WHY, I'M THE BLACK PANTHER!
I'VE KNOWN PANTHER FOR YEARS -- AND YOU'RE NOT HIM.
ALL RIGHT, I'M WESLEY SNIPES!
TRY AGAIN.
MICHAEL JACKSON --?
HEY -- HEY -- HE'S REACHING FOR --
-- A... HAND PUPPET--?!
WHO I AM IS NOT IMPORTANT, AVENGER!
RELEASE ME, OR YOUR KING DIES!
BLAM
YEEARGGH!

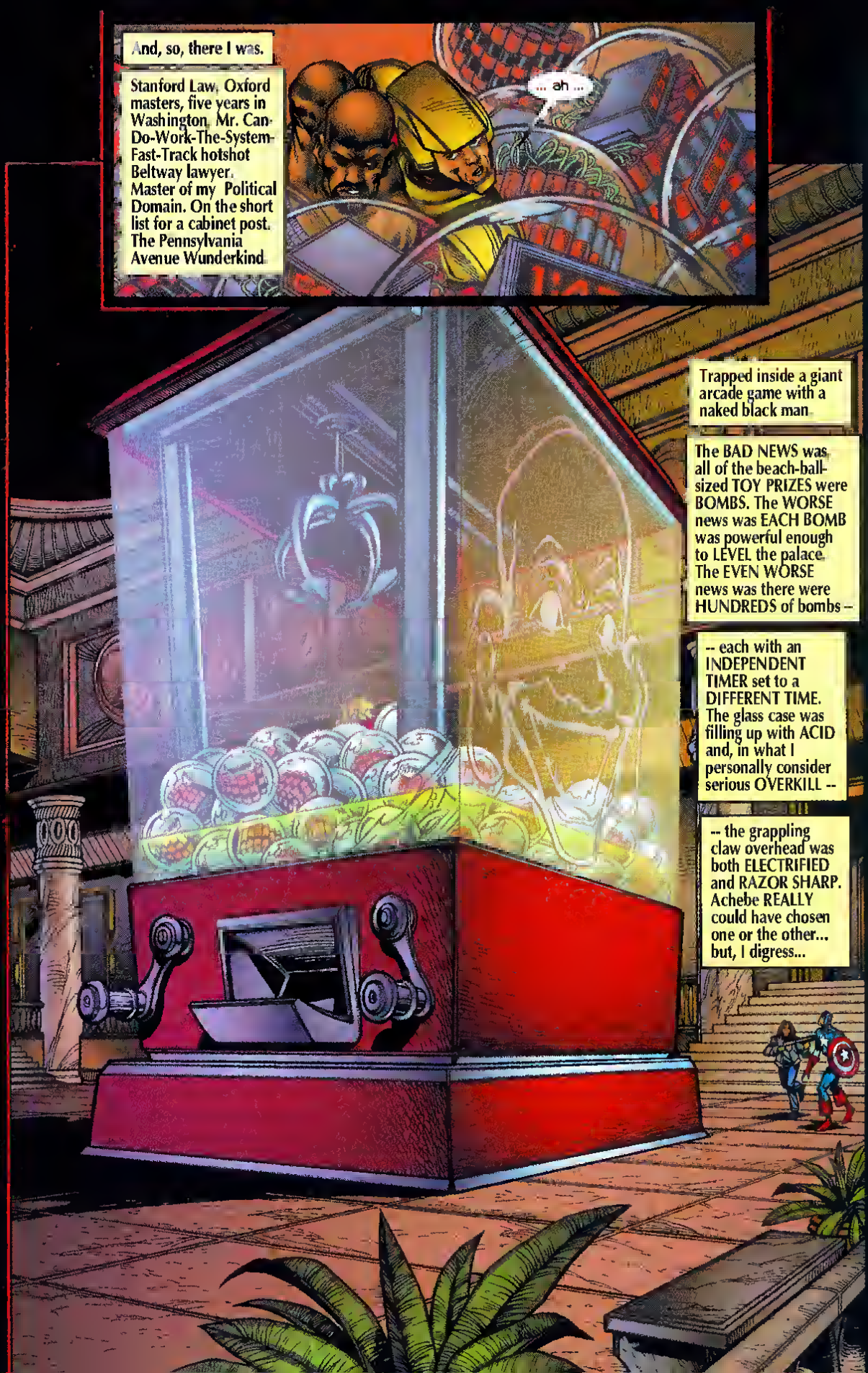



WHAT?
Oh, I *WASN'T* SUPPOSED TO SHOOT THE HAND PUPPET?
KUKUFFER--!
YOU -- YOU *KILLED* HIM -- YOU *KILLED* DAKI!


LUCKILY, I HAVE *ANOTHER*...
WHAT ARE YOUR *TERMS*?
SAFE PASSAGE, CAPTAIN. *RELEASE* ME OR THE KING SHALL *SURELY* DIE.


THINK ABOUT IT -- YOU CAN *ALWAYS* FIND ME *LATER*. I *PROMISE* YOU THAT.
MY FUN HAS BEEN *COMPLETELY* RUINED HERE. ALL I'M INTERESTED IN IS *ESCAPE*.
IF YOU *DETAIN* ME, THE *KING* SHALL MOST ASSUREDLY BE DEAD *NOW*.


THE PALACE *BALL-ROOM*.
AND, I SUGGEST YOU *HURRY* --!

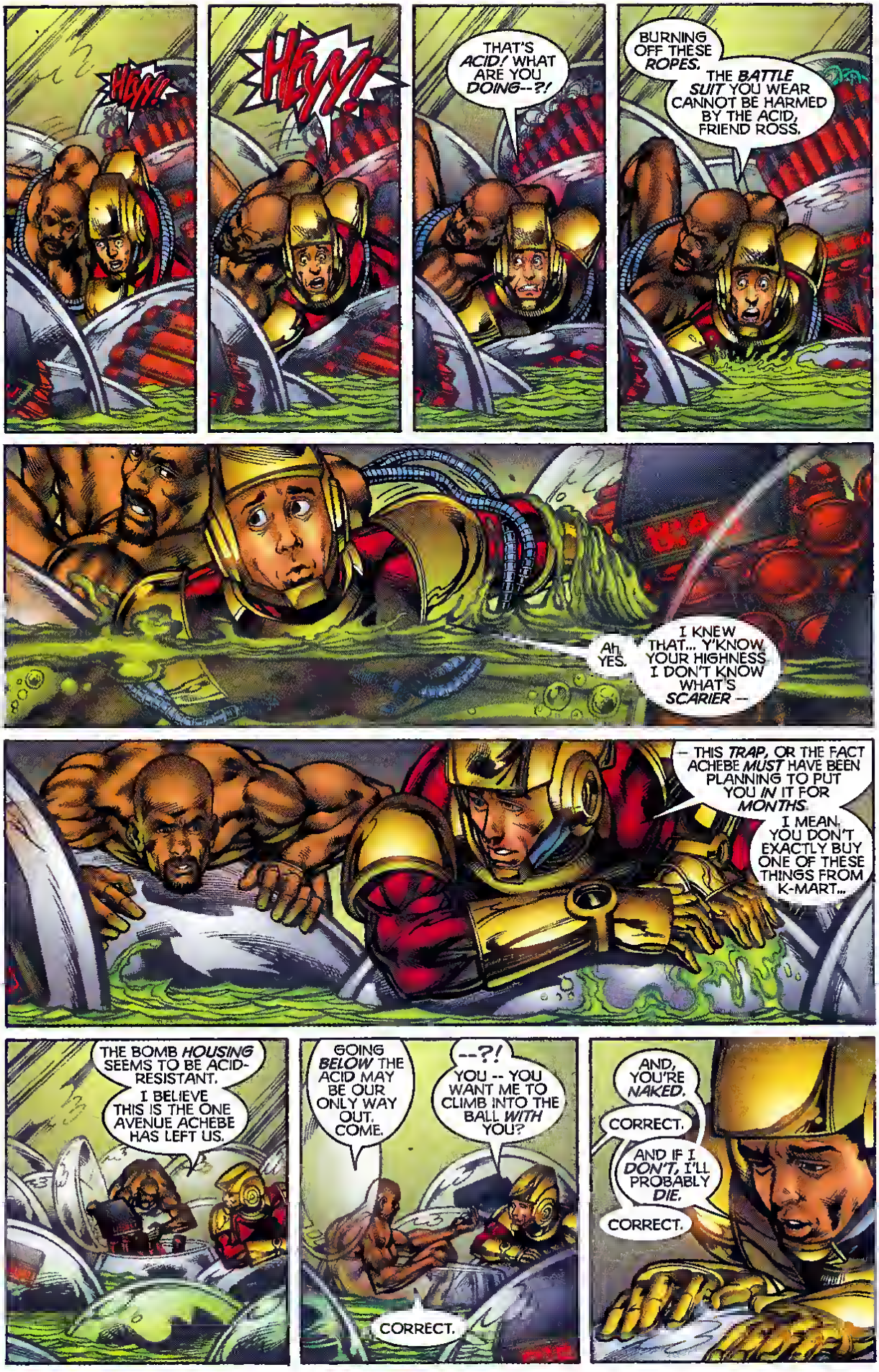

And, so, there I was.
Stanford Law. Oxford masters, five years in Washington. Mr. Can-Do-Work-The-System-Fast-Track hotshot Beltway lawyer. Master of my Political Domain. On the short list for a cabinet post. The Pennsylvania Avenue Wunderkind.
... ah ...
Trapped inside a giant arcade game with a naked black man.
The BAD NEWS was all of the beach-ball-sized TOY PRIZES were BOMBS. The WORSE news was EACH BOMB was powerful enough to LEVEL the palace. The EVEN WORSE news was there were HUNDREDS of bombs --
-- each with an INDEPENDENT TIMER set to a DIFFERENT TIME. The glass case was filling up with ACID and, in what I personally consider serious OVERKILL --
-- the grappling claw overhead was both ELECTRIFIED and RAZOR SHARP. Achebe REALLY could have chosen one or the other... but, I digress...

WHERE'S NELSON RIDDLE WHEN YOU REALLY NEED HIM?

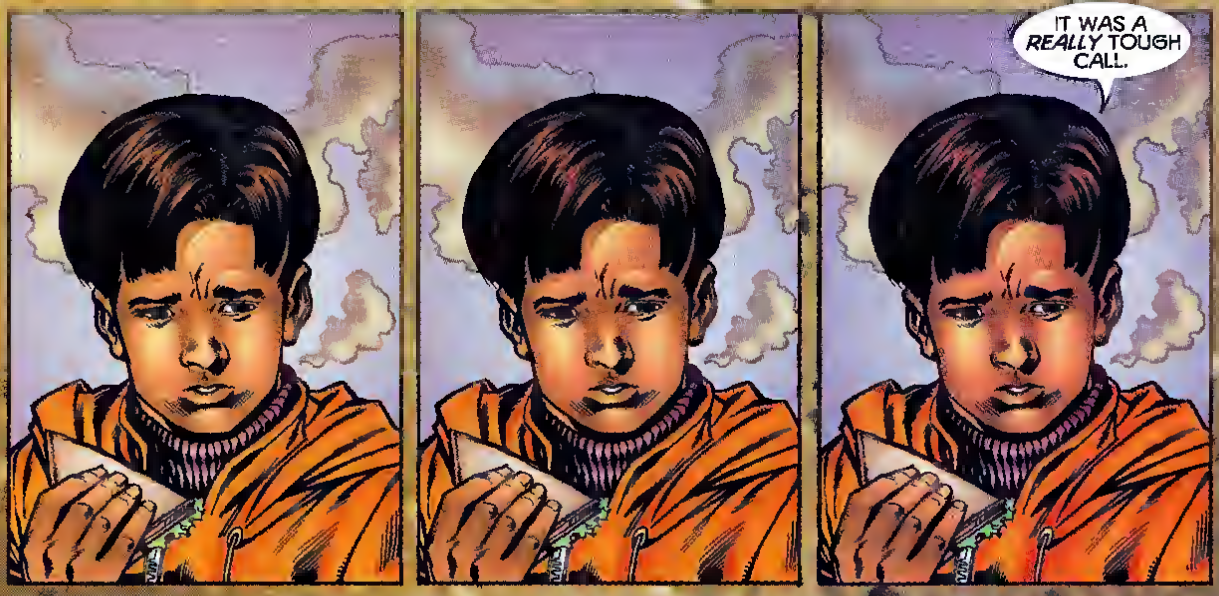




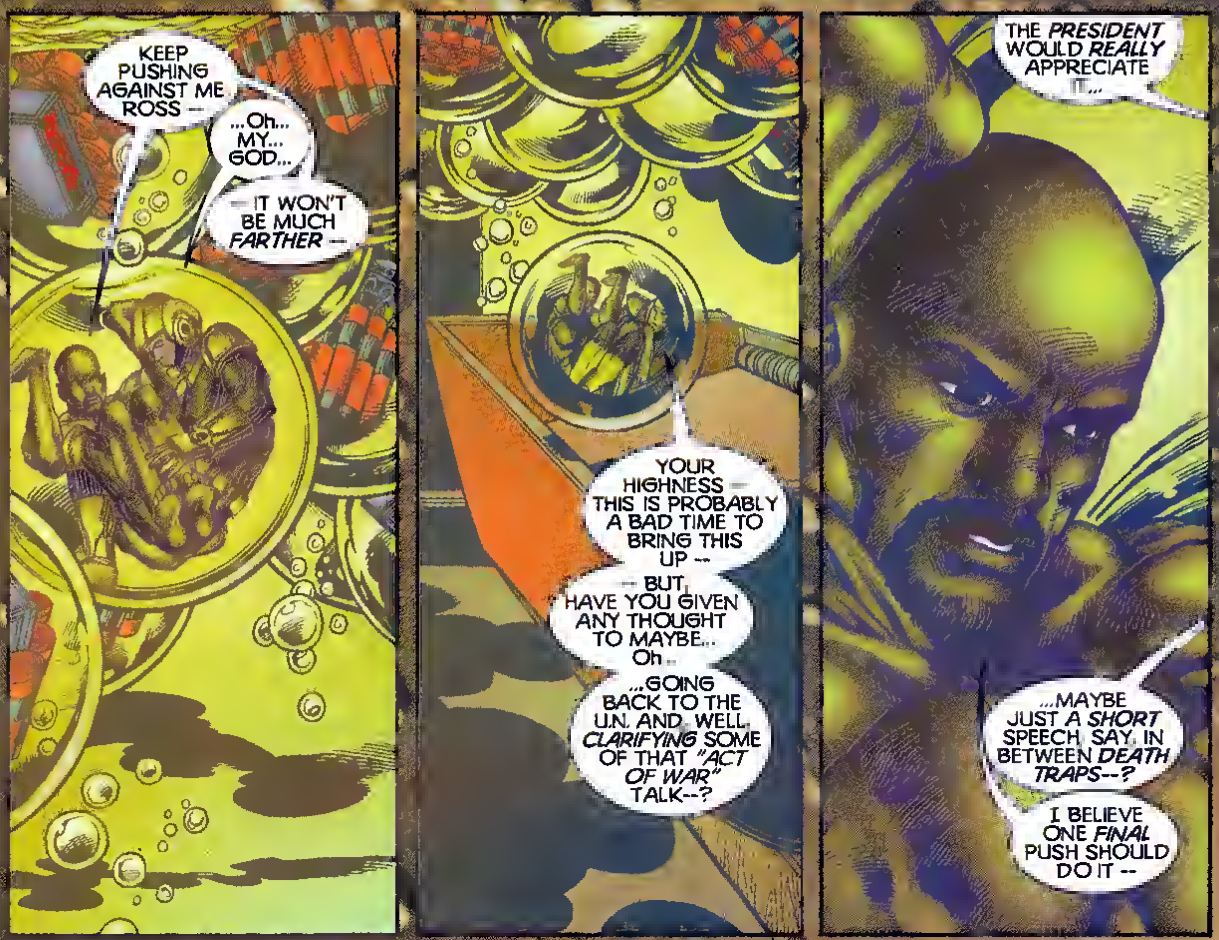



HEYY!
HEYY!
THAT'S ACID! WHAT ARE YOU DOING--?!
BURNING OFF THESE ROPES.
THE BATTLE SUIT YOU WEAR CANNOT BE HARMED BY THE ACID, FRIEND ROSS.
Ah, YES.
I KNEW THAT... Y'KNOW, YOUR HIGHNESS, I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S SCARIER --
-- THIS TRAP, OR THE FACT ACHEBE MUST HAVE BEEN PLANNING TO PUT YOU IN IT FOR MONTHS.
I MEAN, YOU DON'T EXACTLY BUY ONE OF THESE THINGS FROM K-MART...
THE BOMB HOUSING SEEMS TO BE ACID-RESISTANT.
I BELIEVE THIS IS THE ONE AVENUE ACHEBE HAS LEFT US.
GOING BELOW THE ACID MAY BE OUR ONLY WAY OUT. COME.
--?!
YOU -- YOU WANT ME TO CLIMB INTO THE BALL WITH YOU?
CORRECT.
AND, YOU'RE NAKED.
CORRECT.
AND IF I DON'T, I'LL PROBABLY DIE.
CORRECT.

Ah...



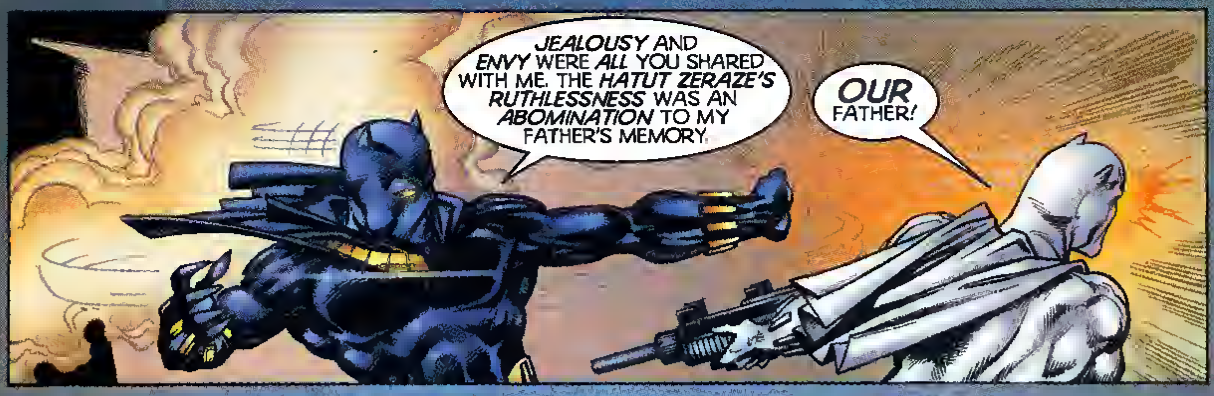
EXCUSE ME, BUT IS THAT AQUA VELVA--?

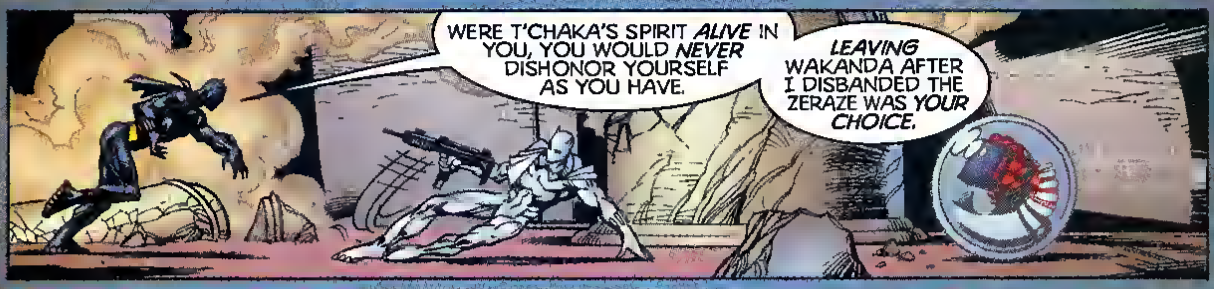



SPLASHHHH
MADE IT--!!
WAIT -- THE CHUTE --
-- MORE BOMBS ARE COMING DOWN THE CHUTE--!
THEY RE BOUNCING ALL OVER THE PLACE--!
EACH WITH ITS OWN TIMER! WE'VE GOT TO GET OUT OF HERE --
--BUT, FIRST, PERHAPS SOME PANTS FOR YOUR HIGHNESS
AAEEE
BRATATATATAT
...HATE THIS JOB...
YOUR VIBRANIUM BATTLE SUIT SAPS THE INERTIA FROM THE BULLETS, ROSS
GET TO SAFETY. HE IS ONLY AFTER ME.
"HE"? "HE" WHO--?!
ME. HUNTER --
-- THE WHITE WOLF.
IT'S TIME FOR A RECKONING BETWEEN BROTHERS.


YOUR HIGHNESS -- THE BOMBS --
GET OUT OF THE PALACE, ROSS.
WHICH MEANS WHAT -- YOU WON'T BE BLOWN TO BITS--?
ROSS -- GO.
'KAY.
GHAH--!
HIYA, SHRIMP -- WELCOME TO THE PARTY!
THE PALACE IS GONNA --
KA-ZOOM
...THE PANTHER...
HE KNOWS WHAT HE'S DOING.
YEAH... SURE LOOKS THAT WAY DOESN'T T...
...WE'VE GOT TO GET HIM OUT OF THERE
ACHEBE'S EXPLOSIVES, MY LORD -- ALL SET TO DIFFERENT TIMERS.
WE MAY HAVE MINUTES OR PERHAPS MERELY SECONDS.
HOW IRONICALLY APPROPRIATE.
SHE'S DEAD, YOU KNOW.
RAMONDA, THE WOMAN YOU ALLEGEDLY LOVED.
AND MY GUESS WHATEVER BOND WE HAD LEFT DIED WITH HER, T'CHALLA.
AND NOW WE BOTH MAY JOIN HER IN THE PAVILION OF THE PANTHER GOD

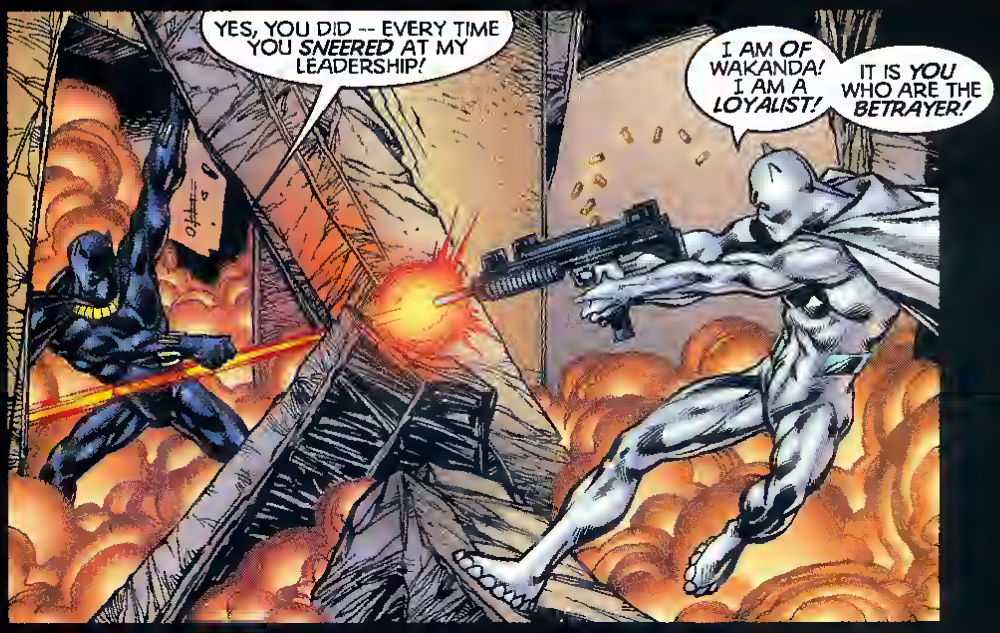

SO *BE* IT.
STILL STASHING *UNIFORMS* AROUND THE PALACE, I SEE.
BETTER THIS WAY.
ACHEBE IMPERSONATING *YOU* ORDERED MY *RELEASE* -- PERHAPS THE *ONE* THING THE IDIOT'S DONE *RIGHT*.
ADMIT IT, T'CHALLA -- THIS BATTLE WAS *INEVITABLE*.
ONLY IN YOUR *MIND*, HUNTER.
YOUR LOYALTY *ALWAYS* HAD A *PRICE*.


JEALOUSY AND ENVY WERE ALL YOU SHARED WITH ME. THE HATUT ZERAZE'S RUTHLESSNESS WAS AN ABOMINATION TO MY FATHER'S MEMORY.
OUR FATHER!


WERE T'CHAKA'S SPIRIT ALIVE IN YOU, YOU WOULD NEVER DISHONOR YOURSELF AS YOU HAVE.
LEAVING WAKANDA AFTER I DISBANDED THE ZERAZE WAS YOUR CHOICE.


AND YOUR "AID" IN MY TIME OF NEED WAS INSULTINGLY, THINLY VEILED SELF-INTEREST.
YOU HAVE NO CLAIM ON THE THRONE, HUNTER.
I NEVER MADE ONE!


KROOT!


YES, YOU DID -- EVERY TIME YOU SNEERED AT MY LEADERSHIP!
I AM OF WAKANDA! I AM A LOYALIST!
IT IS YOU WHO ARE THE BETRAYER!


AND MY FATHER WOULD HAVE APPROVED OF YOUR WAYS?
YES!
THEN, I SUBMIT, YOU DID NOT KNOW OUR FATHER AT ALL.
IRREGARDLESS T'CHAKA IS DEAD.
I AM THE KING.
I RULE AS I RULE.
THEN PERHAPS THIS IS INDEED THE TIME TO CHANGE THAT--!


Outside, the White Wolf's boys were making things fairly interesting.
...NOT THE HAIR... NOT THE HAIR...
I was just trying to stay out of the way --
-- when, suddenly, when I least expected it --
KABOOM
-- I became a MAN.
ROSS -- NO -- IT'S TOO DANGEROUS--!
Don't ask me to EXPLAIN it, Nikki. It's just -- well -- I just couldn't LEAVE him in there.
WON'T... BE LONG NOW, MY LORD...
ACHEBE'S DEVILISH HANDIWORK HAS ALL BUT LEVELED YOUR GREAT HOME...
...TIME ... TO END THINGS BETWEEN US...
SO, HUNTER -- THIS -- THIS TREACHERY -- IS THE ACT OF A LOYALIST --?!
I AM LOYAL TO THE THRONE, T'CHALLA!
THIS IS A DISPUTE BETWEEN BROTHERS!!
COMMAND ME AS MY KING --
-- AND, OF COURSE, I WILL OBEY YOU.
THAT'S ALL IT WILL TAKE, T'CHALLA --


-- COMMAND ME.
COMMAND ME. I DEMAND IT!
YOU STUBBORN FOOL -- DON'T MAKE ME KILL YOU JUST TO SPITE ME!
I AM OF WAKANDA! BE MY KING!
I... SHALL NEVER BE KING...
... OF YOUR WAKANDA.
HAVE IT YOUR WAY, THEN --
NNOOO!
LET HIM GO--! LET HIM GO, YOU JERK--!
THAT'S IT.
YOU DIE --


--??
THANK YOU FOR YOUR AID, FRIEND ROSS --
-- BUT IT WAS NOT NECESSARY. I NEEDED TO KNOW FOR CERTAIN WHAT ROLE HUNTER PLAYED IN USURPING MY RULE --
-- BUT I WOULD NOT HAVE ALLOWED THE WHITE WOLF TO KILL ME DURING OUR STRUGGLE..
...I EMPLOYED SEVERAL NERVE PINCHES THAT WOULD INDUCE SLEEP --
-- I'M SURE IT'S A FASCINATING STORY, YOUR HIGHNESS, BUT RIGHT NOW I THINK THE PRUDENT ACTION MIGHT BE TO --
RUN!!
WHY?
WHY--?!?
KRAKOOM
-- THAT'S WHY!
WHERE'D YOU GO--?!
I HAD TO REVIVE THE WHITE WOLF -- HE INSISTED ON USING HIS OWN ESCAPE ROUTE.
MAYBE IT HAD SOMETHING TO DO WITH HIS GETTING LOCKED UP AS SOON AS WE GET OUT!
THE WHITE WOLF KNOWS THIS PALACE BETTER THAN I DO -- HE MAY HAVE FOUND A FASTER EXIT.
SO, MAYBE WE SHOULDA FOLLOWED HIM --?!


ROSS, ABOUT THIS RETRACTION TO THE U.N. --
YOU WANNA TALK ABOUT THAT NOW--?
I SPOKE ONLY THE TRUTH TO THE U.N., ROSS --


-- I BELIEVE TRUTH IS THE ONLY REAL WEAPON THAT CAN EFFECTIVELY END THESE KINDS OF THINGS.
RECANTING MY STATEMENT WOULD BE A DISSERVICE TO HUMANITY.
AAHHHHH!


HOWEVER, I WILL RETURN TO NEW YORK AND FURTHER EXPLAIN MY THINKING ON THESE MATTERS.
THAT IS THE BEST I CAN OFFER RIGHT NOW.
AAHHHHH!


GEEZ...
...WELL, I GUESS THAT'S IT, THEN.
A GREAT WARRIOR... HAS FALLEN...
...I SHOULD HAVE DIED AT HIS SIDE...
WE ALL DID WHAT HE ASKED OF US ZUR!
NOW, ALL WE CAN DO IS--

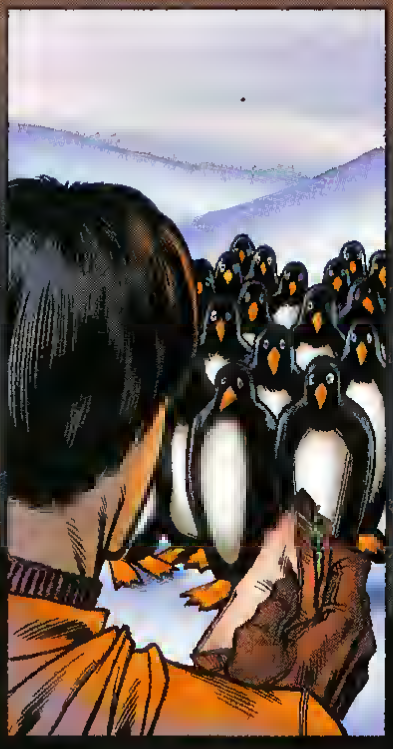

...ATTEND THE CELEBRATION FEAST, CAPTAIN!
I REGRET ANY CONCERN I MAY HAVE CAUSED YOU.
AAHHHHH!

AWAKENINGS


The story thus far:
There once was a woman named RAMONDA.
She was the only mother the client had ever known.
Achebe killed her.
Or, so everyone THOUGHT...
...
...DID IT... DID IT WORK--?
I FEARED FOR YOUR SAFETY, MOTHER -- SO I ACTIVATED THE SUSPENSION CELL SOONER THAN PLANNED.
I SHOULD NEVER HAVE ASKED YOU TO ALLOW THE CONSPIRATORS TO "RECRUIT" YOU -- TO FEIGN AN ALLIANCE WITH THEM --
-- WHILE FEEDING INTELLIGENCE REPORTS TO ME. HAD YOU ACTUALLY BEEN HARMED, I WOULD HAVE EARNED MY FATHER'S SHAME --
-- BUT YOU WERE THE ONLY ONE I COULD COMPLETELY TRUST.
IT WASN'T EASY PRETENDING TO PLOT AGAINST YOU, SON... I WAS NEVER SURE THEY COMPLETELY BOUGHT IT.
BUT WE'VE BROUGHT YOU HOME... WITH A MINIMUM OF BLOODSHED.
SO, ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL, Eh, YOUR HIGHNESS?
WELL, OTHER THAN THE PRESIDENT'S SENDING ME TO ICELAND IF I DON'T GET YOU TO RETRACT YOUR STATEMENTS.
I'M SURE HE'S JUST JOKING, OF COURSE...

BIRDS


...WHICH PRETTY MUCH BRINGS US UP TO *DATE.*
NOW, I'M NOT ENTIRELY SURE GUARDING A DECREPIT *MONITORING STATION* FITS IN MY *JOB DESCRIPTION.*
I MAY HAVE SOME BASIS FOR AN *EEOC* TITLE 4 COMPLAINT.




YOU'RE RIGHT. WHY BOTHER
WELL, IT WAS A FUN CAREER WHILE IT LASTED.
YOU KIDS *ENJOY* THAT NOW.
FRIEND ROSS--!


MY *MASTER* HAS SPOKEN TO YOUR *STATE DEPARTMENT!*
THEY HAVE REQUESTED YOU REMAIN AT THE KING'S SIDE!
WHAT SAY YOU--?


It was a REALLY tough call...
NEXT
THE END OF THE END IS THE BEGINNING...
THANKS JOE, JIMMY, NANCI AND KELLY FOR HEROICS ABOVE AND BEYOND THE CALL!


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[Imbie]


ONE HUNDRED MILLION NINE HUNDRED THOUSAND PARALLEL REALITIES!
COMPRESS THOSE WAVEBANDS! COME ON!
EIGHTY MILLION TWO HUNDRED THOUSAND PARALLEL REALITIES!
NUMBER ONE EPIPHANY NACELLE JUST LOST FAITH AND SHUT DOWN
SIX MILLION TWO HUNDRED THOUSAND PARALLEL REALITIES AND COUNTING!
JETTISON NACELLE ONE!
WE'RE LOSING MORE
WE'RE IN A DIMENSIONAL FLUME! I'VE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING SO --
HOLD THE WHEEL STEADY! THIS NEEDS ALL OUR MINDS IN UNISON!
WE NEED TO DIVERT THE POWER STREAMS TO COMPENSATE FOR ENGINE LOSS!
NOH-VARR!
YOU THERE, BABY?
HEAT-REFLECTORS? ATMOSPHERIC FRICTION WILL VAPORIZE THE SHIP'S SENSORSKIN IF WE DON'T HAVE THOSE SHIELDS
GET OUT OF THE PLEK TANK BEFORE THE DATA FREEZES!
FORTY SIX MILLION PARALLEL REALITIES AND COUNTING!
THE FLUME'S BREAKING UP! LOOK AT THAT --
WE NEED EVERYBODY BACK IN THE SHIP'S CORTEX!
WHERE'S CAPTAIN GLORY?
SOMEONE'S MANUALLY DIVERTING THE COSMIC STREAM


ONE HUNDRED FIFTEEN PARALLEL REALITIES!
FIFTY-SIX PARALLEL REALITIES.
THERE!
VISUAL ON THAT SPOOK WE PICKED UP CAME RIGHT IN AROUND THE MOON IMPOSSIBLE DECELERATION
THEY'RE BROADCASTING S.O.S MESSAGES IN EVERY KNOWN EARTH LANGUAGE AND A FEW BILLION OTHERS
I KNOW I CAN HEAR THEM. SCATTER THEIR TRANSMISSIONS AND LOCK
CAPTAIN GLORY! THIS IS THE SHIP'S CORTEX!
YOU CAN'T DO THIS!
THESE ENGINES DON'T NEED TO HEAR THAT KIND OF TALK MERREE
COSMIC RADIATION GAVE ME MY POWERS! I WON'T LET IT KILL ME NOW!


TWELVE PARALLEL REALITIES!
ELEVEN!
EPIPHANY ENGINES RUN ON PURE BELIEF
DOC WONDER GAVE HIS LIFE IN THE UNFINISHED UNIVERSE: THAT'S WHY THE KIRBY MACHINES ALLOWED US TO PASS THROUGH THEIR REALITY
HE BELIEVED, ENSIGN MARVEL.
WE CAN MAKE IT, BELIEVE IN ME.
TARGET LOCKED
WELL? FIRE
WE CROSSED TEN BILLION PARALLEL REALITIES TO GET BACK HOME. YOU AND ME AGAINST ALL THE ODDS
SENSORSKIN TEMPORARILY FRICTION BLIND



SOLE SURVIVOR

GRANT MORRISON
Script

J.G. JONES
Art

marvel

HELLO CRUEL WORLD



AVALON STUDIOS & MATT MILLA
Colors

RICHARD STARKINGS & COMICRAFT'S WES ABBOTT
Letters

JOE QUESADA & JIMMY PALMIOTTI Editors

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LOOK AT IT THIS WAY: NONE OF THIS IS REAL.
YOUR *PAIN* IS NOT REAL NOT *OFFICIALLY* REAL.
YOUR FEAR AND CONFUSION ARE NOT OFFICIALLY REAL.
THIS BUILDING DOES NOT EXIST *OFFICIALLY* —
I DO NOT EXIST.
THEREFORE *YOU* DO NOT EXIST LOGIC AT WORK
I CAN DO *ANYTHING* TO YOU YOU HAVE NO ADVOCATE HERE NO ONE TO BARGAIN FOR YOUR RELEASE
THE *CHURCH* HAD THE IRON MAIDEN AND THE *RACK*.
WE HAVE *THE BUBBLE*.
WE *WILL* BREAK YOUR RESISTANCE WE ARE ALL *PROFESSIONALS* HERE
I AM A PIRATE A SCAVENGER A *MULTI-TRILLIONAIRE* IN THIS SORRY WORLD OF PREDATORS AND PROFITEERS
YOU ARE *NOTHING*.
YOU ARE *SALVAGE*; THE FLOTSAM OF THE VOID. THE PROPERTY OF THE *MIDAS FOUNDATION*.


MY PROPERTY.
I CAN SWEAR IN SEVERAL INTERSTELLAR LANGUAGES AND SUB-DIALECTS KREE BADDOON SKRULL.
IT'S SO REVEALING- WHAT THEY COME OUT WITH ON THE DISSECTION TABLES


MONSTERS BODY-SNATCHERS THINGS FROM OUTER SPACE
YOU WILL BE STRIPPED VIVISECTED, GUTTED AND CATALOGUED THE LEFTOVERS WILL BE SOLD TO CONNOISSEURS OF ALIEN ANATOMY
THE WAY WE'RE GUTTING THE WRECK WE FOUND YOU IN
GROVER'S MILL NEW JERSEY
TEAMS HAVE PENETRATED ALL BUT THE INNERMOST SEALED CHAMBERS SO FAR
WE ALREADY HAVE IN OUR POSSESSION SOME VERY INTRIGUING WEAPONS, PATENTS FOR WHICH WILL TRIPLE MY WEALTH OVERNIGHT
THERE ARE BITS OF YOUR PEOPLE EVERYWHERE..
PTOO
SPLUT


TEST THE SALIVA.
I MADE YOU ANGRY IN ENGLISH.
SO I'M CONFIDENT NOW YOU'LL UNDERSTAND WHEN I TELL YOU THAT I WASN'T BORN WITH THE NAME MIDAS, DAD WASN'T JOE MIDAS OF PENNSYLVANIA. NOTHING LIKE THAT.
I CHANGED MY NAME BY DEED AFTER FIVE YEARS OF DELIBERATE EXPOSURE TO COSMIC RADIATION.
EVERYTHING I TOUCH TURNS TO GOLD. AFTER ITS FASHION. I CAN TURN ANYTHING TO MY ADVANTAGE.
"MIDAS," YOU SEE.
DOCTOR MIDAS! BAD NEWS FROM THE SALVAGE SITE...
FIVE PEOPLE DEAD AND THE REST ARE ARE...


WE KNOW YOUR SPACESHIP WAS POWERED BY A COSMIC RAY ENGINE!
I REQUIRE A RELIABLE SOURCE OF COSMIC RADIATION TO COMPLETE MY MUTATION
WHERE DID YOUR SHIP GO..?
HE SAYS NOTHING HE BARELY MOVES AND WHEN HE DOES IT'S ONLY TO SNEER OR SPIT
YOUR EYES KEEP DRIFTING...
DAMN! YOU'RE DISGUSTING I'M TRYING TO IDENTIFY HIS WEAK POINTS
THE PLACES HE'D BREAK
...NOT IMPOSSIBLE, DOCTOR MIDAS, THE BUBBLE HAS STATE-OF-THE-ART VIRTUAL SENSORS; HE CAN'T HAVE A LOUD THOUGHT WITHOUT IT SHOWING UP HERE
THERE'S THE PROOF. HE'S REROUTING PAIN SIGNALS INTO HIS AUDITORY CORTEX.
FORGET TORTURE TEAR OFF HIS FACE HE'LL ONLY HEAR THE NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC TUNING UP
...BLOOD. I NEED A BLOOD SAMPLE FOR MY BOSS, DRACULA
SO DON'T LAUGH.
YOU'RE THE GUY THAT TURNS PAIN INTO MUSIC, RIGHT?
WOO!
THERE'S WHAT I CALL A HIT. CATCHY. HUH?
YOUR GUT MUST BE SINGING AND DANCING LIKE BRITNEY SPEARS NOW, MY RIGHT?
WUP
...OKAY, HE'S A KNOWN SPECIES – THE SALIVA TESTED KREE-POSITIVE. BUT TELL THEM THE DNA HAS A COMPLETELY ANOMALOUS TRIPLE-HELIX STRUCTURE
SOMEBODY BETTER GET MIDAS
THERE'S SOMETHING ELSE GET OVER HERE! WHAT THE HELL IS THIS ON THE SLIDE?
LAB
ALIEN SUBSPECIES, ZERO RIGHTS, END OF STORY. A DAMN BACTERIA GROWING ON THE TOILET WALL HERE'S GONNA GET THE VOTE BEFORE YOU DO, SO WELCOME TO PLANET...
HE'S SEETHING WITH SUBMICROTECH!
HIS BODY FLUIDS ARE NANOACTIVE!
XENOHAZARD ALERT!


REPEAT -- WE HAVE A XENOHAZARD ALERT!!
YEAH, WELL, YOU JUST PROVED ME RIGHT... FILTHY LUULL. UH
WHUSS
WHUMMA DO ME? NOT IN MY HEAAA
WHUHH?
UH, SURE I KNOW WHAT YOU MEAN... I EVEN MAKE ME SICK SOMETIMES. OUR MARRIAGE JUST DOESN'T... HOW'D YOU GET IN THE BUBBLE, SWEETHEART?... ARE YOU REAL OR IS IT JUST
OFF
THIS CAN'T BE RIGHT...
SHOULD HAVE LEFT WHEN I STILL HAD A CHANCE, HONEY. DON'T THINK I EVER REALLY THOUGHT MUCH ABOUT ANYTHING AND NOW IT'S NOT UP TO ME ANY
CHIK
-HUNN-


SAY AGAIN, WHAT?
IT'S LOOSE! DOCTOR MIDAS IT'S ON THE LOOSE!
AGGRESSIVE DECONTAMINATION ALERT! WE GOT A LIVE ONE!
FWUMP
UHNNNAA
...NAIL CAME OFF IN MY NECK...STUCK IN THERE ITCHING LIKE YOU GOTTA STOP THIS, IT DOESN'T FEEL
I THOUGHT MY WIFE WAS


KWUMPF
N12
SWEET LORD IN HEAVEN!
WHAT ARE WE UP AGAINST?
HE'S KREE! THE LIVING WEAPON OF AN ALIEN EMPIRE!
STOP HIM!
FIRE AT WILL! BRING HIM DOWN!
WHAT'S A KREE?
I CAN HEAR HIM BUT I CAN'T SEE HIM... WHAT ARE WE...
OH NO...


THERE'S INSECT DNA IN THERE! HE'S PROBABLY SUPER TOUGH, SUPER-FAST... OH MY GOD!
HE'S HALF-MAN HALF-COCKROACH! GET YOUR MEN OUT OF --
EEEAAA!
BRAP!
FTIK


LOCK DOWN AND STERILIZE THE BUILDING!
GET MY DAUGHTER OUT! I'LL NEED HER LATER
DOZENS DEAD.
IT'S RUNNING AT WE'RE READING EIGHTY-SIX MILES AN HOUR!
IT'S COMING RIGHT AT.....
DOCTOR MIDAS. HE'S KILLING EVERYONE. HE'S ON HIS WAY TOWARDS
IT.
NOT 'HE'.
IT.
COMING ONLI
HOME IN

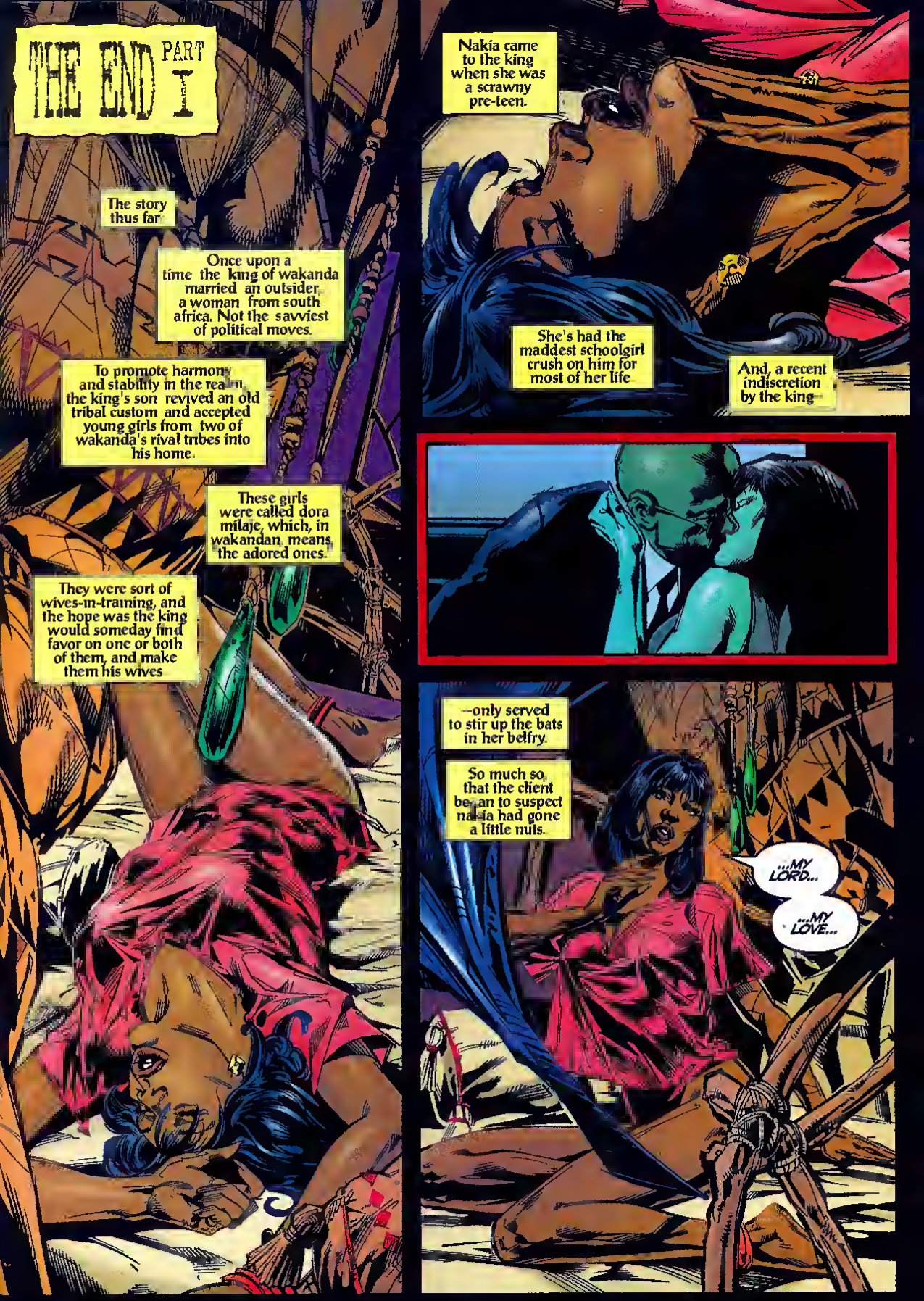

CLEVER SPACE COCKROACH
I'LL SAY IT AGAIN
EVERYTHING I TURN EVERYTHING TO MY ADVANTAGE


Coca-Cola
Coke
JET'S ADVANCED DESIGN HAS BAFFLED EVEN LOCAL EXPERTS LIKE PROFESSOR REED RICHARDS WHOSE LATEST VOYAGE TO THE NEWLY DISCOVERED POSITIVE ZONE CONTINUES TO--
THE LOGO, A GOLDEN 'M' -- AND NO, IT'S NOT MCDONALD'S -- BELONGS TO NO COMMERCIAL OR PRIVATE AIRLINE REGISTERED IN THE U.S. AND NO ONE HAS COME FORWARD TO CLAIM THE MYSTERY JET BLOCKING TRAFFIC IN TIMES SQUARE.
GUNS AMMO
tkts
tkts
SUBWAY
SUNSPOT ACTIVITY CONTINUES TO PEAK. EXPERTS SAY WE'RE BEING COOKED BY SOLAR STORMS WHICH MAY BE TRIGGERING MASSIVE CHANGES IN THE WAY PEOPLE LIVE AND THINK.
SO FIRE A MISSILE AT THE SUN FOR CRYING OUT LOUD
CRAZY KIDS ON SOLAR FLARES. NEXT THING YOU KNOW THEY'RE BUSTING CAPS N--
RIVERA NAMED SERIES MVP
YANKEE FANS BOO
SHAAA--


REPAIRS?
REPAIR THE CAPTAIN REPAIR STAR SPLENDOR. CAN YOU DO THAT? THEY KILLED THEM. DON'T YOU GET IT?
'REPAIR' SHMEER, YOU STUPID GREEN--
MUTE, PLEX!
SHUT UP
YOU DO YOUR JOB. I'LL DO MINE.
'MUTE', I SAID YOU REPAIR THE SHIP.
AND I'LL FIX THE PLANET.


MY WAY!
VRRP
NEXT ISSUE
VS
boyworld


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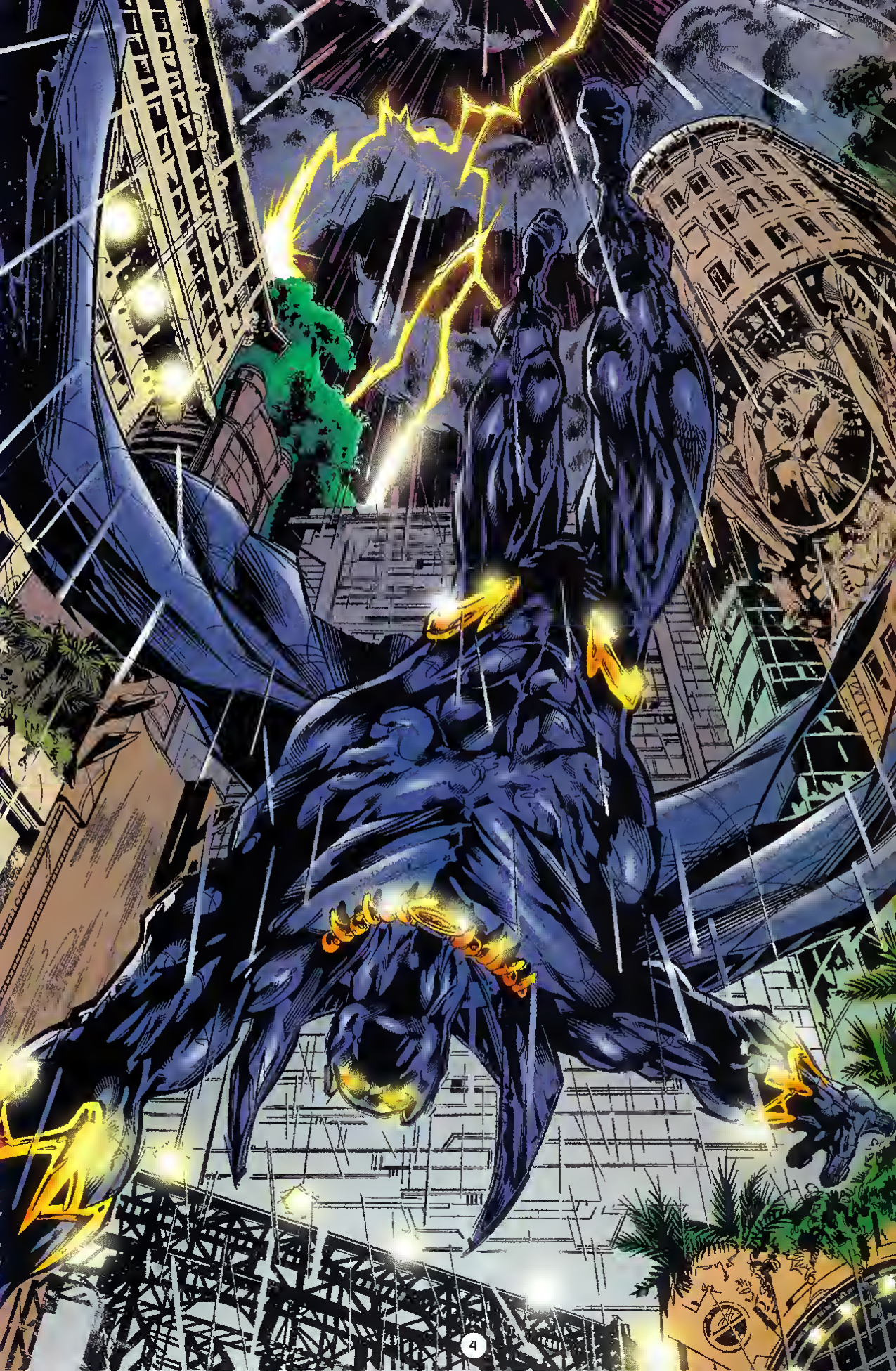


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SHARPEFONT & PT - letters * BRAD VANCATA - colorist * RUBEN DIAZ - editor * BOB HARRAS - chief


<WHERE IS SHE, BELOVED?>
<WHAT HAVE YOU DONE WITH HER?>
<WITH... WITH WHOM, MY LO-->
<INSULT ME AGAIN, CHILD, AND I SHALL RETURN YOU TO YOUR VILLAGE IN DISGRACE.>
<YOU KNOW VERY WELL WHOM-->*
* THE PANTHER SPEAKS TO THE DORA MILAJE IN HAUSA -- RDZ
THOOM
<MONICA, MONICA LYNNE.>
<AS I SAID, LORD, THE GHUDAZAI-->
<START PACKING.>
<I SPEAK THE TRUTH OF THIS MATTER, MY LORD: THE WOMAN IS DEAD.>
<IF SHE IS DEAD, THEN IT IS YOU WHO HAVE KILLED HER.>
<YOU WHO HAVE BETRAYED ME AND DISHONORED YOURSELF AND YOUR TRIBE.>
<BUT, MASTER--I LOVE YOU-->
<SPEAK TO ME NOT OF THESE THINGS, GIRL.>
<WITH THE DAWN, I RETURN YOU TO YOUR FATHERS.>
<YOU HAVE DENIED ME. NOW I MUST DENY YOU.>

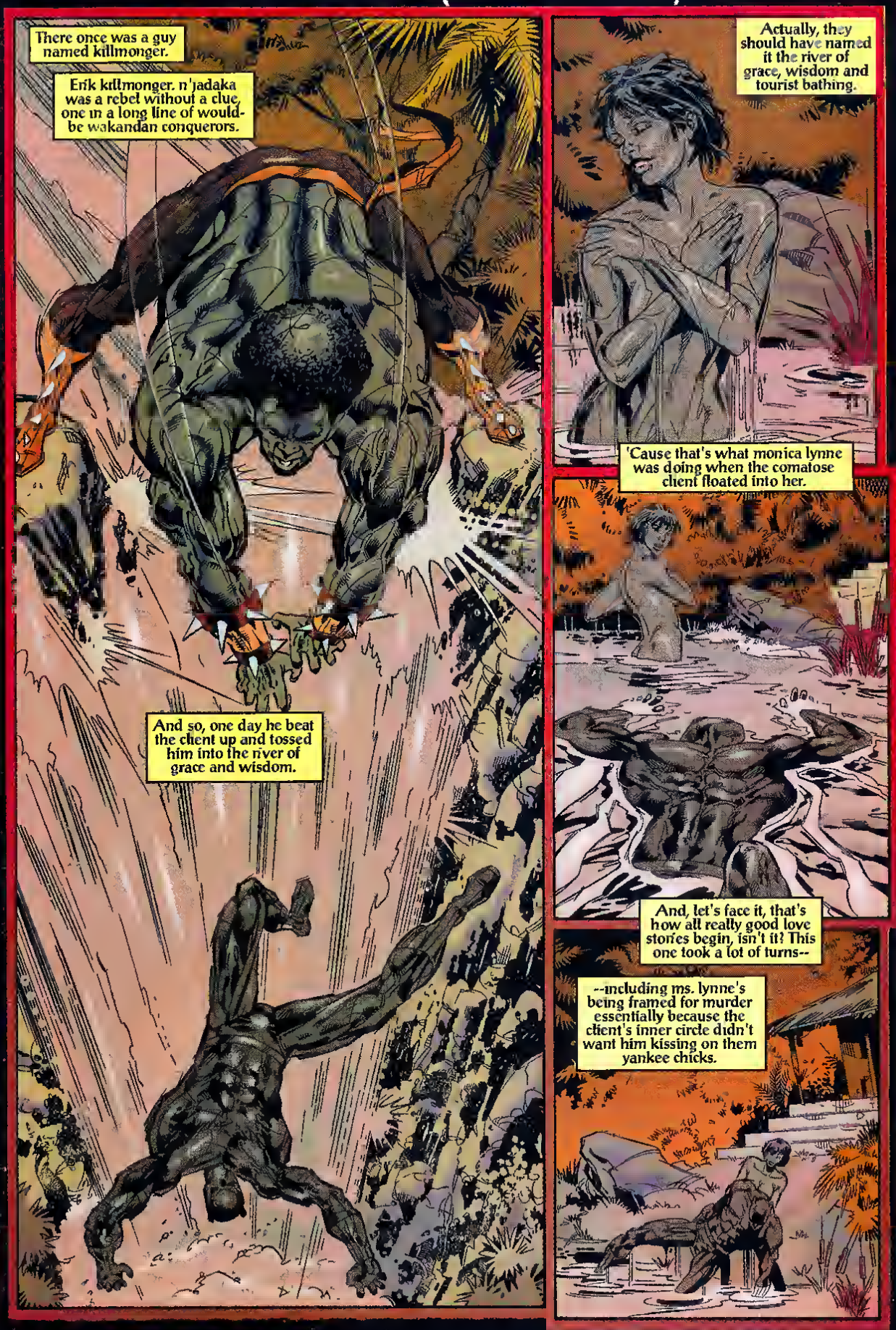



SKY SLED
ON LINE


SKY SLED
POWER CELL
003%
THWAKKTT!
RRRRKKAATT!
KEERRAASSH



THE END (PART II)




She and the client were engaged for quite a while, and then--poof! The relationship just ended.
YO.
Possibly because the client knew the whole deal was doomed from the start.
Y see, monica lynne was a wannabe singer.
Which meant she was one of them.
YO--
YO--EY--
YO--
--STEP OFF!
You know..them.
GET OUTTA HERE--!!
THWAK
Those pathetic aging losers still hoping for that big record deal.
Fifteen years of waiting for the call had made monica a little bitter.
And possibly immune to life's little tragedies.


At the time, we had no idea Nakia had shoved Monica out of a talon fighter.
All we knew for sure was she was gone. And possibly dead.
YEAH.
WELL, WHATEVER.
...T'CHALLA...


THE END (PART III)
A few days before, a banana-mouth screwball named ACHEBE reduced the client's PALACE to RUINS and almost took out the whole COUNTRY with it. When I saw the client there, hanging out among the rubble, my first thought was that he was MOURNING the loss of his ancient patriarchal HOME.
My second thought was along the lines of "What's the deal with the big cape?" I mean, okay, the little skippy half-cape WAS a tad Burt Ward, but now, OVERNIGHT, he'd gone totally Big Cape Guy. I probably shoulda CALLED somebody. Instead, I brought him some TEA. Seemed like the thing to do.
It's in like, EVERY movie. "Act 2 Scene 4: Diminutive servant brings brooding Big Cape Guy a lovely beverage..."
YOUR HIGH-NESS--

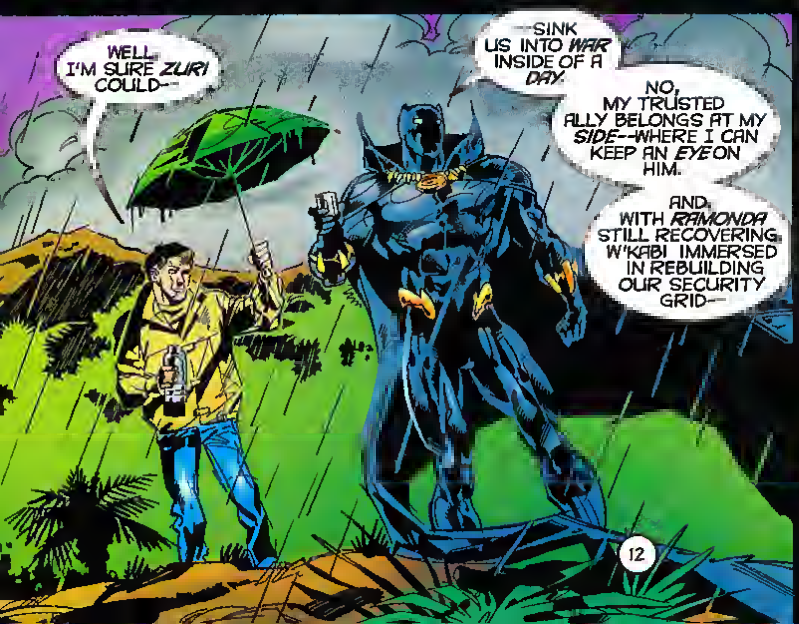

—BROUGHT YOU SOME *TEA*, SIR.
THIS WEATHER'LL *KILL* YOU...
...AH, I MEAN...


NO APOLOGIES NECESSARY, MY FRIEND.
YOU WILL FORGIVE ME. THE *CASUALTIES* OF MY CONQUEST...
THAT WHICH I HAD HOPED TO *AVOID*...


MS. LYNNE.
STILL NO SIGN OF HER.
I FEAR NAKIA MAY HAVE DONE SOME *SHAMEFUL* THING.


THE RAIN IS COMPLICATING OUR EFFORTS
MONICA COULD BE *ANYWHERE*, POSSIBLY... BENEATH OUR FEET...

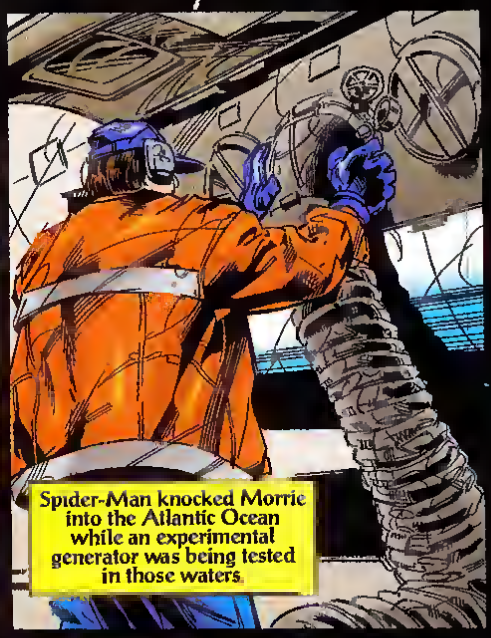

...AH...
I MUST RETURN TO *NEW YORK*--DEFUSE THE *POLITICAL TENSION* THIS COUP D'ETAT HAS WROUGHT.
I WILL REQUIRE A *REGENT* HERE IN WAKANDA.

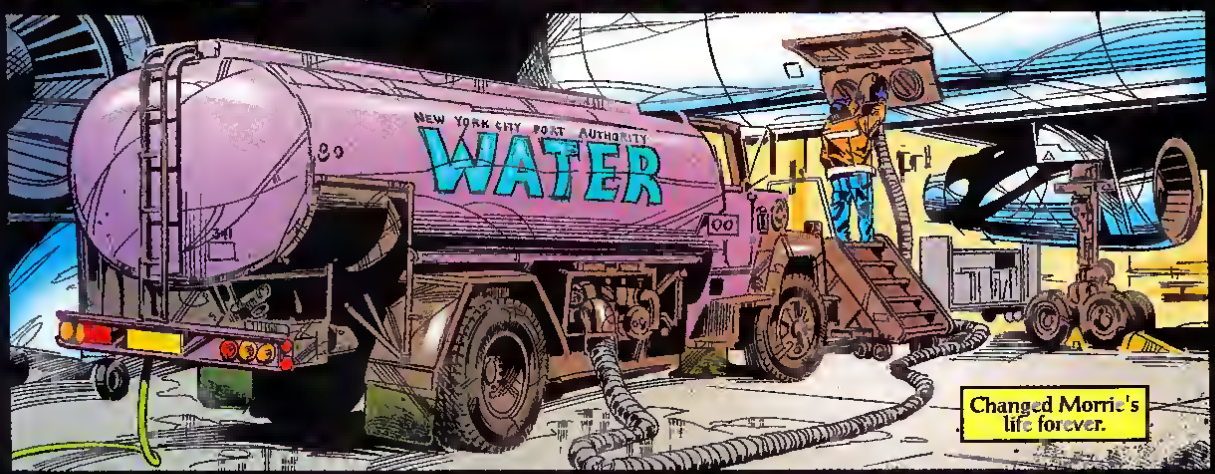

WELL, I'M SURE *ZURI* COULD—
—SINK US INTO *WAR* INSIDE OF A *DAY*.
NO, MY TRUSTED ALLY BELONGS AT MY *SIDE*—WHERE I CAN KEEP AN *EYE* ON HIM.
AND, WITH *RAMONDA* STILL RECOVERING, W'KABI IMMERSED IN REBUILDING OUR SECURITY GRID—


—THE ONLY *RELIABLE* ALLY WHO MAY BE *TRUSTED* WITH THE AFFAIRS OF STATE—
—IS *YOU*.
...
...EXCUSE ME...?

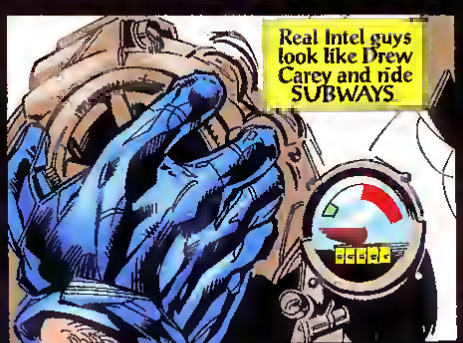
THE END (PART IV)

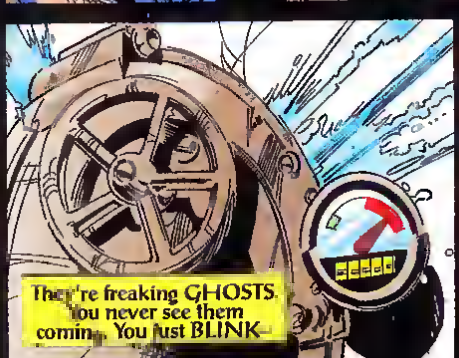













--and they're THERE.
Morrie Bench became THE HYDRO-MAN.
The rest was all BAD news.
WHAT---?!
BAGGAGE TRANS
HOLEEE---!!
WHAT THE BLAZES WAS THAT---?!?
---?!

THE END (PART V)




--BLARING YOUR CHEERY JINGLE, ELICITING A PAVLOVIAN RESPONSE FROM THESE INNOCENT CHILDREN--
--WHILE TRAMPLING THEIR DIGNITY AND SELF-ESTEEM BY DIVIDING THE HAVE'S FROM THE HAVE-NOT'S!
QUEEN--
FRIN
C.P.D.
GOTTA HAND IT TO YOU, I.C.P. IT'S THE MODEL OF EFFICIENT ANTIDISESTABLISHMENTARISM.
KID-- I SELL ICE CREAM.
SAVE THE DEEP STUFF FOR SOMEONE ALLOWED TO VOTE.
--QUEEN--
A KID IS A GOAT. YOU SEE A KID, YOU SLAP A KID.
DON'T TEMPT ME...
TURN THE TRUCK AROUND, YO. JACK BE QUICK.
WE DON'T WANT YOU IN OUR HOOD.
--CHANTÉ. KNOCK IT OFF.
YO, CURTIS, DON'T GO ALL MONTEL WILLIAMS ON ME.
HERE WE GO--
LOOK, CHANTÉ. YOU KNOW YOU CAN'T BLOCK THE STREET LIKE THIS.
HOW WOULD YOU LIKE ME TO BLOCK THE STREET, CURTIS--
LOOK, KID. YOU'RE LIKE A SISTER TO ME
--BUT I WILL LOCK YOUR NARROW BEHIND
THAT'S RATHER THE IDEA, FOOL.
KLERHLHKK
OOPS. SORRY 'BOUT THE NOSE-BLEED
16

THE END (PART IV CONTINUED)














AUTHORIZED PERSONNEL ONLY
CAPTAIN--?
DO YOU BOYS NEED ANYTHING IN THERE--?
YOU SURE YOU DON'T WANT SOME COFFEE OR SOMETHING?
WELL-- JUST BUZZ IF YOU NEED ME
--I'LL BE RIGHT OUTSIDE!
AUTO PILOT ENGAGED
I read somewhere that the human body is 98% water.
And, at least in the case of Zurich Flight 1635's PILOTS--
--2% HYDRO MAN.

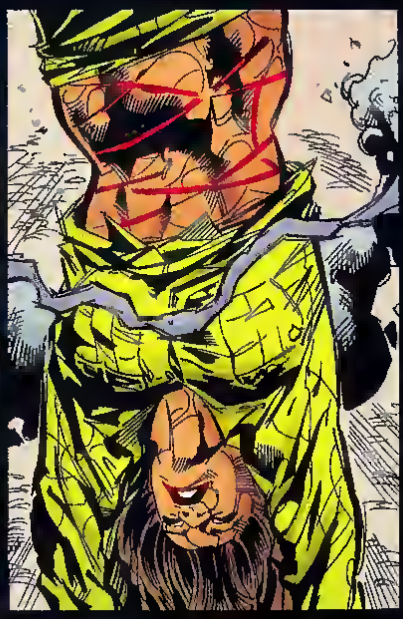

THE END (PART VI)
There once was a kid named Vance Astrovik.
One day he fell into a VAT of CREAM OF WHEAT, and gained powerful TELEKINETIC abilities.
Actually, that's probably not true
Actually, I have no idea how Astro got his powers. All I know for SURE is one day he pinned on a CAPE--
--and started calling himself JUSTICE
Then the kin folks said, "Vance move away from thar!"
So he loaded up the truck and moved into AVENGERS MANSION--
HEY-- WATCH OUT--!!
--which is where he ran into the CLIENT late one evening.
NO NEED FOR ALARM, JUSTICE--
--YOU TELEKINETICALLY REORIENTED THE LENS ON THAT LASER CANNON--
19


—SO IT WOULD *INTERCEPT* AND *CANCEL OUT* THE OTHER'S. WE ARE IN *NO* DANGER
HOW DID YOU--HOW'D YOU GET *IN* HERE--?
THE FRONT DOOR.
OH, I'M SORRY--OF COURSE—
YOU MUST BE AN INACTIVE *AVENGER*
IN A MANNER OF SPEAKING.
I WAS HOPING TO FIND CAPTAIN AMERICA--SETTLE SOME UNFINISHED BUSINESS.
I'M THE ONLY ONE *HOME*...
...FALCON...? NO...BLACK GOLIATH...?
WHEN DO YOU EXPECT THE *TEAM*--?
AFTER THAT SCRAP WITH ULTRON, THEY'RE TAKING SOME TIME TO TAKE CARE OF *PERSONAL* MATTERS.
I'VE ALREADY CHECKED HIS *HOME*--HE MUST BE AWAY ON A *MISSION*.
LOOK--IF YOU WANT TO *WAIT*, I CAN LOAN YOU A *GUEST ROOM*--
...I *KNOW* THAT VOICE...*
BLEEP!! BLEEP!! BLEEP!!
*JUSTICE HAS NEVER SEEN THE PANTHER WITH HIS MASK OFF. --RUDEN
AN *ALERT* SIGNAL!
'SCUSE ME--GOTTA GO TO WORK--
I'LL BE BACK IN--

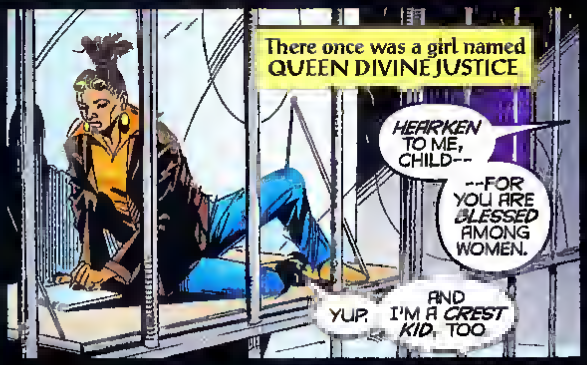

--A SEC...
...HOW...
I'VE SPENT MANY YEARS IN THIS MANSION, JUSTICE.
THERE ARE MANY SHORTCUTS.
BOEING 747
THIS PLANE HAS VEERED FAR OFF COURSE AND IS LOSING ALTITUDE.
IT IS NOT RESPONDING TO THE CONTROL TOWER.
DZHOKHAR GAPON
DZHOKHAR
I'D BETTER PUT OUT A GENERAL ALERT--
THAT WILL NOT BE NECESSARY.
I BELIEVE THE DISTRESS CALL--THE [illegible]MONS--WAS INTENDED FOR ONE MAN.
ME.
--?!?
--YOU--?
YES.
DZHOKHAR GAPON'S PRESENCE IS PROOF OF THAT.
BUT--
I WILL EXPLAIN EN ROUTE. FOR NOW--
--WE MUST HURRY TO THE QUINJET HANGAR.
...FALCON... BOY I WOULD'VE NEVER HEARD THE END OF THAT ONE!

THE END OF THE END IS THE BEGINNING

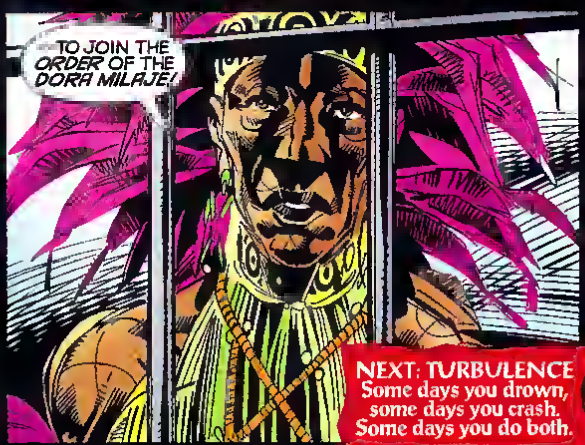






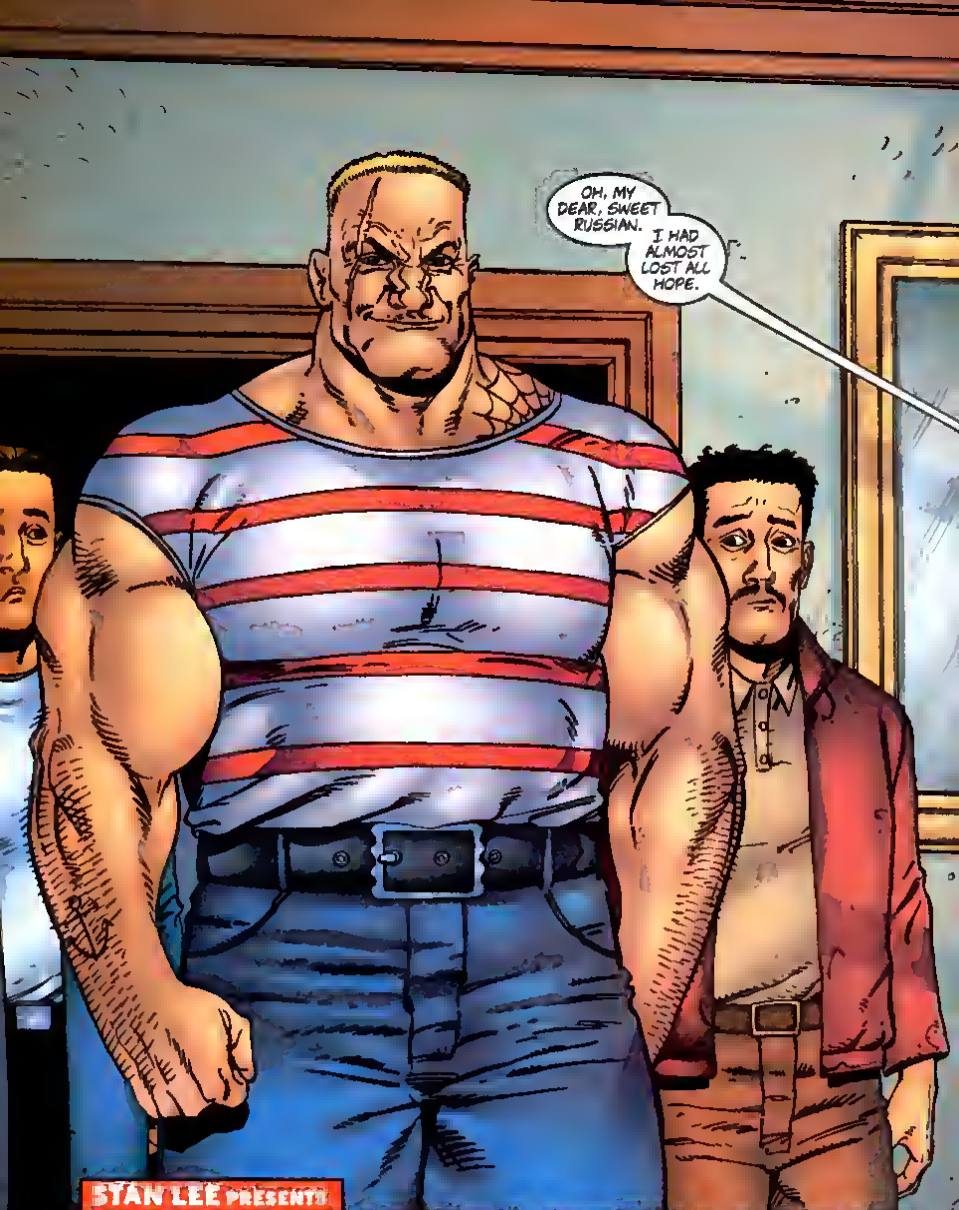







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MA GNUCCI AND THE FAMILIES, CONFERENCE CALL:
IDIOTS!
YOU HAVE TO SEND ME REINFORCEMENTS! YOU HAVE TO STOP THE PUNISHER NOW OR HE'LL COME FOR YOU NEXT!
WE AIN'T TAKING ON THE PUNISHER, MA.
PEOPLE DO THAT END UP CHOPPED MEAT.
GOOD LUCK, MA.
YOU'RE ON YOUR OWN.
SO YOU'RE JUST GOING TO STICK YOUR HEADS IN THE SAND AND HOPE—
KLICK
YOU SCUM!
YOU STUPID, COWARDLY, WORTHLESS—
HELLO, MA.
YOU...
YOU CAME AFTER ALL.



STAN LEE PRESENTS

FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE

GARTH ENNIS STORY STEVE DILLON PENCILS JIMMY PALMIOTTI INKS
CHRIS SOTOMAYOR COLORS RICHARD STARKINGS & COMICRAFT'S WES ABBOTT LETTERS
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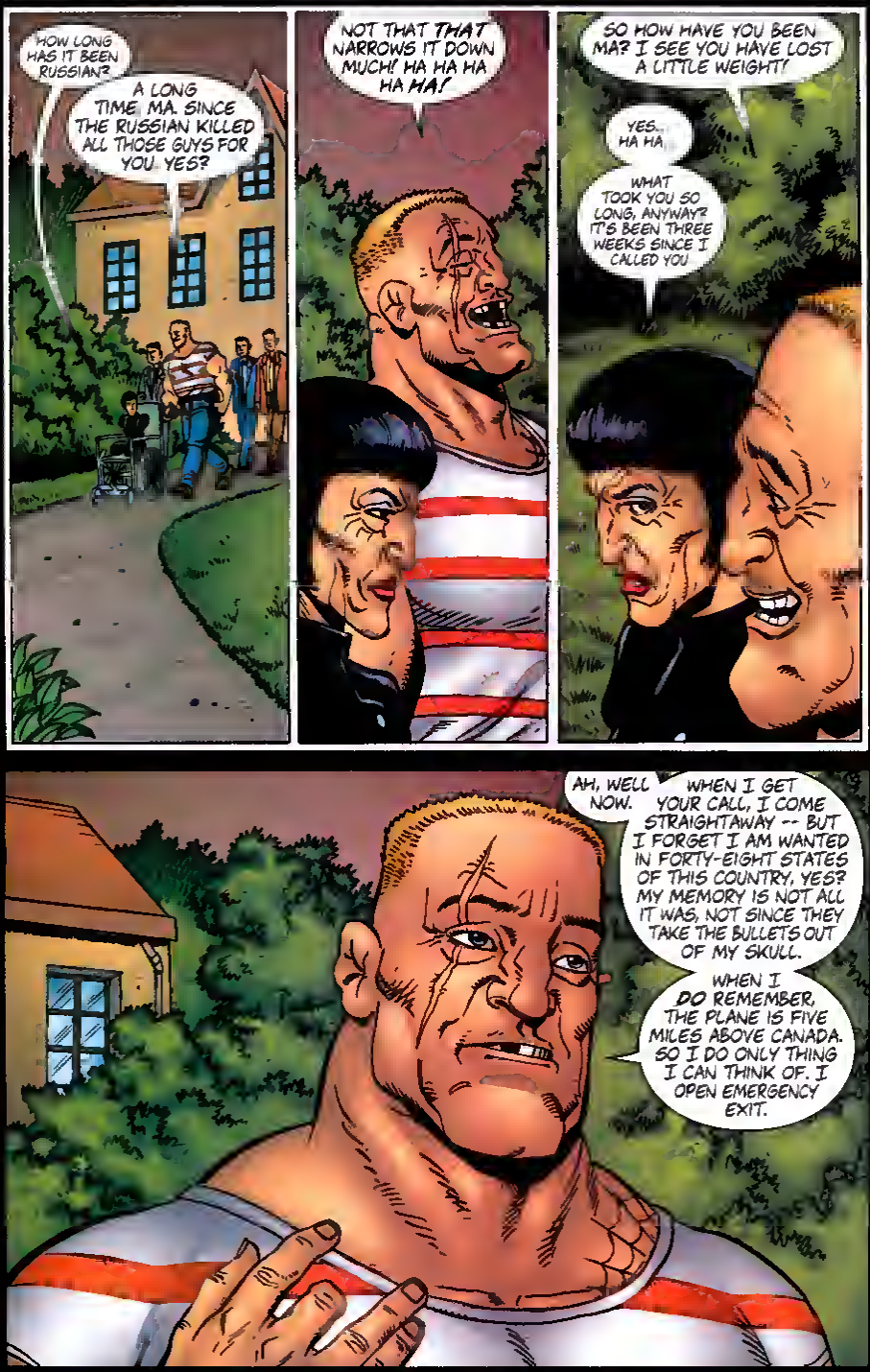
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THE MINUTE I'M WELL ENOUGH TO WALK I START MOVING THE ARMORY.
I USE A SAFEHOUSE IN RED HOOK, LEFT OVER FROM MICRO'S TIME. FIGURE I CAN BE OUT OF HERE IN A DAY, MAYBE TWO SO LONG AS THE WOUNDS DON'T OPEN.
THE PLAN IS TO GET OUT OF HERE AND NEVER COME BACK.
I'M ON THE SECOND VANLOAD WHEN IT HAPPENS.
HEY, MR. SMITH!
DIDN'T KNOW YOU WERE OUT OF THE HOSPITAL, MR. BUMPO.
PIZZA
YEP. GOT HOME YESTERDAY. DOC SAID IT WAS ONLY A MINOR STROKE, SO NO NEED FOR ANOTHER BYPASS OR ANYTHING.
S'POSED TO TAKE MORE EXERCISE, THOUGH. FIGURED A STROLL DOWN TO SAL'S'D BE JUST THE TICKET.
WELL, YOU TAKE IT EASY.
YOU TOO, MR. SMITH. KEEP ON PUNISHING.




WHAT DID YOU SAY?
RELAX, MR. SMITH! I KNOW ALL ABOUT IT!
DIE, CRIMINAL SCUM! BUDDA BUDDA BUDDA! EH?


OH, LISTEN, I HAVEN'T TOLD ANYONE --
HOW EXACTLY DID YOU FIND OUT, MR. BUMPO?
NO, WAIT. DON'T TELL ME.
LET ME GUESS.

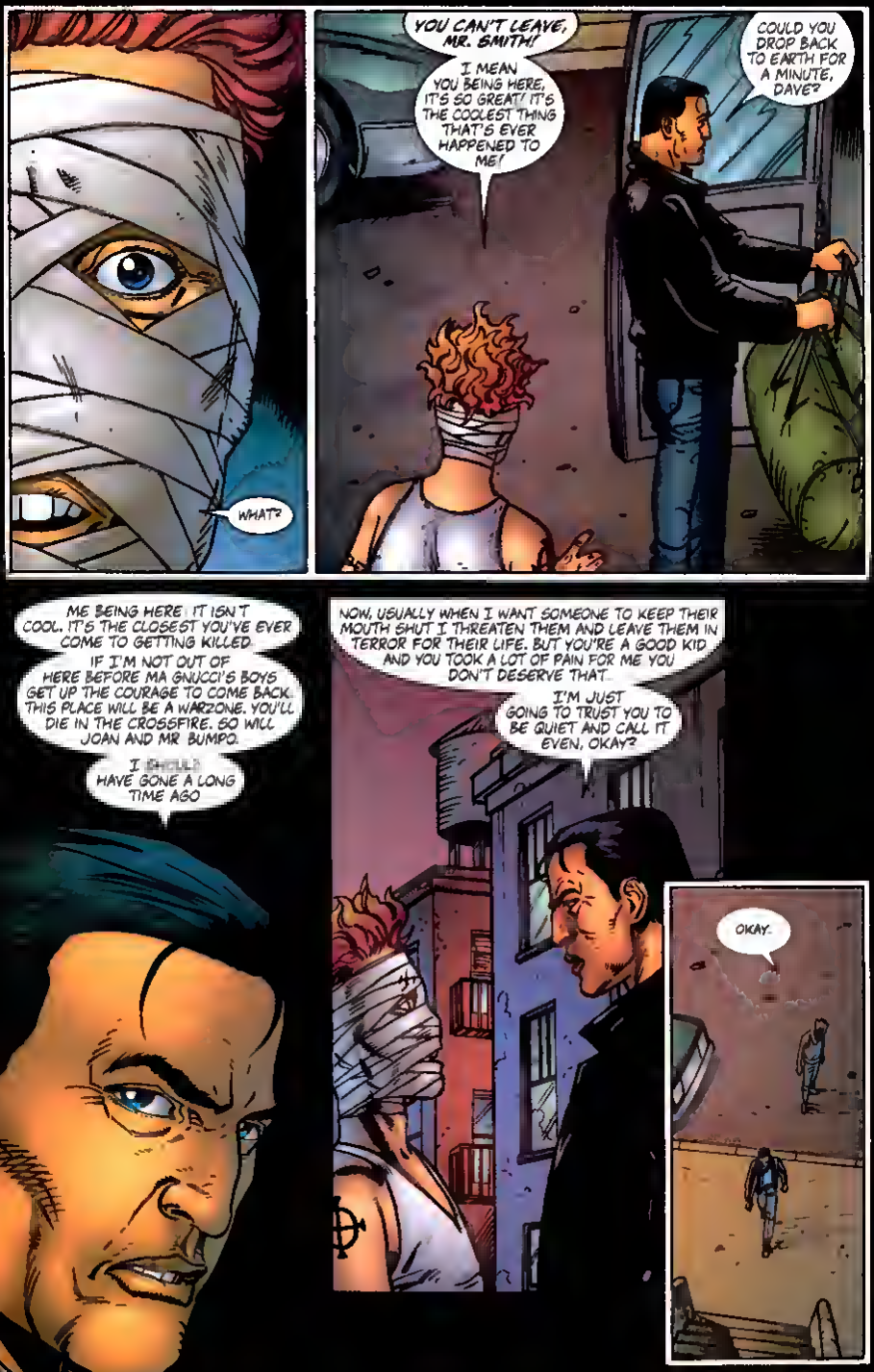

HOW LONG HAS IT BEEN RUSSIAN?
A LONG TIME, MA. SINCE THE RUSSIAN KILLED ALL THOSE GUYS FOR YOU, YES?
NOT THAT THAT NARROWS IT DOWN MUCH! HA HA HA HA HA!
SO HOW HAVE YOU BEEN MA? I SEE YOU HAVE LOST A LITTLE WEIGHT!
YES... HA HA
WHAT TOOK YOU SO LONG, ANYWAY? IT'S BEEN THREE WEEKS SINCE I CALLED YOU
AH, WELL NOW.
WHEN I GET YOUR CALL, I COME STRAIGHTAWAY -- BUT I FORGET I AM WANTED IN FORTY-EIGHT STATES OF THIS COUNTRY, YES? MY MEMORY IS NOT ALL IT WAS, NOT SINCE THEY TAKE THE BULLETS OUT OF MY SKULL.
WHEN I DO REMEMBER, THE PLANE IS FIVE MILES ABOVE CANADA. SO I DO ONLY THING I CAN THINK OF. I OPEN EMERGENCY EXIT.

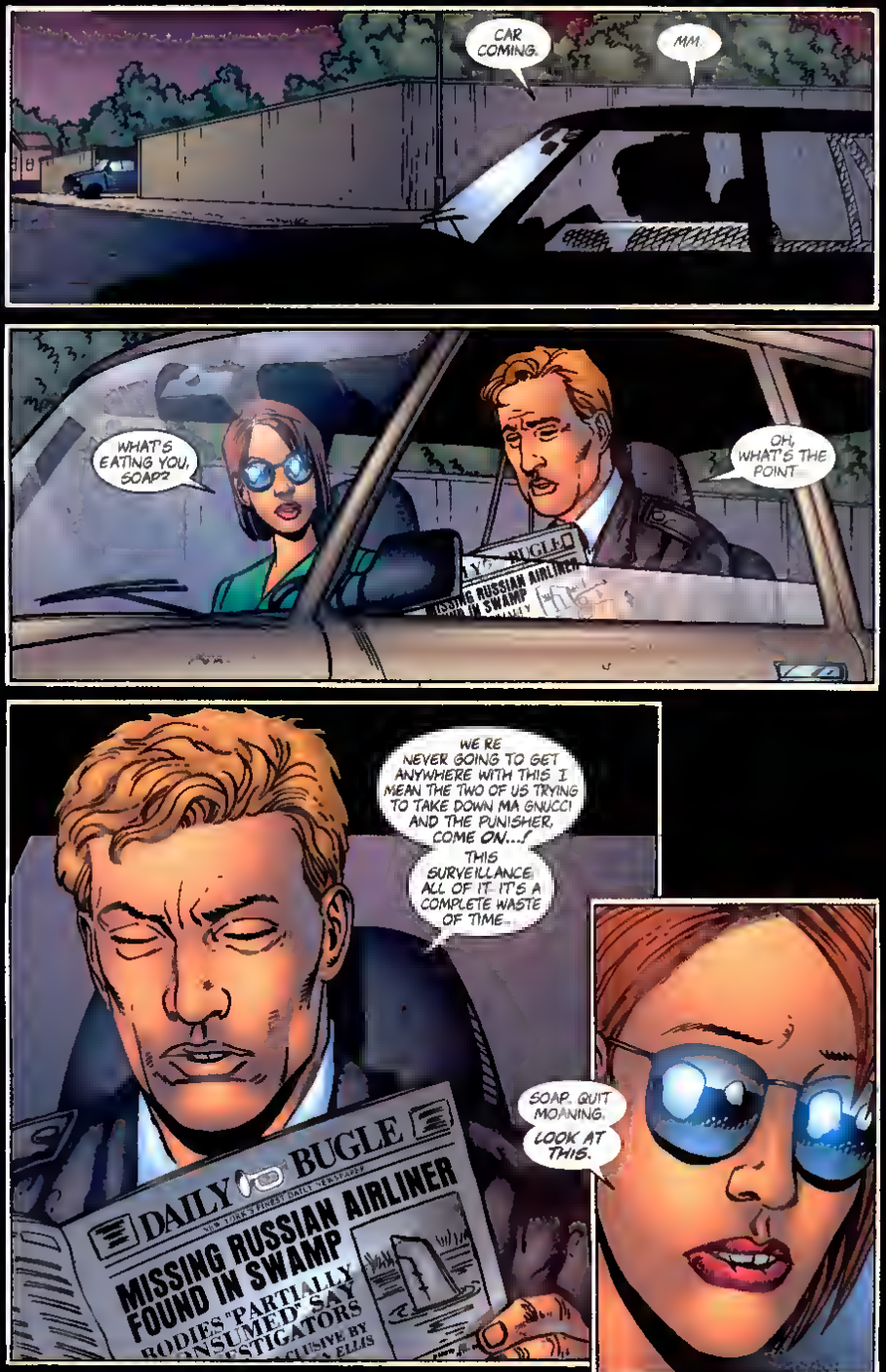

WHEN WE CRASH. I HIT MY HEAD I AM...CONFUSED FOR A WHILE. YES? A LOT IS NOT CLEAR TO ME.
BUT SOON IT ALL COMES BACK, AND I CROSS THE BORDER WITHOUT DELAY. AND BINGO!
HERE I AM.
SO WHAT IS THIS PROBLEM YOU ARE WANTING ME TO SOLVE...?
DO YOU KNOW WHO THE PUNISHER IS?
IS HE SUPER HERO?
NO. BUT -- WELL, I SUPPOSE HE FIGHTS CRIME --
IS HE LIKE MIGHTY THOR? I AM FAN OF MIGHTY THOR.
HE HAS BIG HAMMER. HE SEEMS LIKE GOOD COMMUNIST.
THE PHOTO. SHOW HIM THE PHOTO. FOR CRYING OUT LOUD.
THERE! THAT'S THE PUNISHER.
THAT'S THE MAN I WANT YOU TO SHRED.

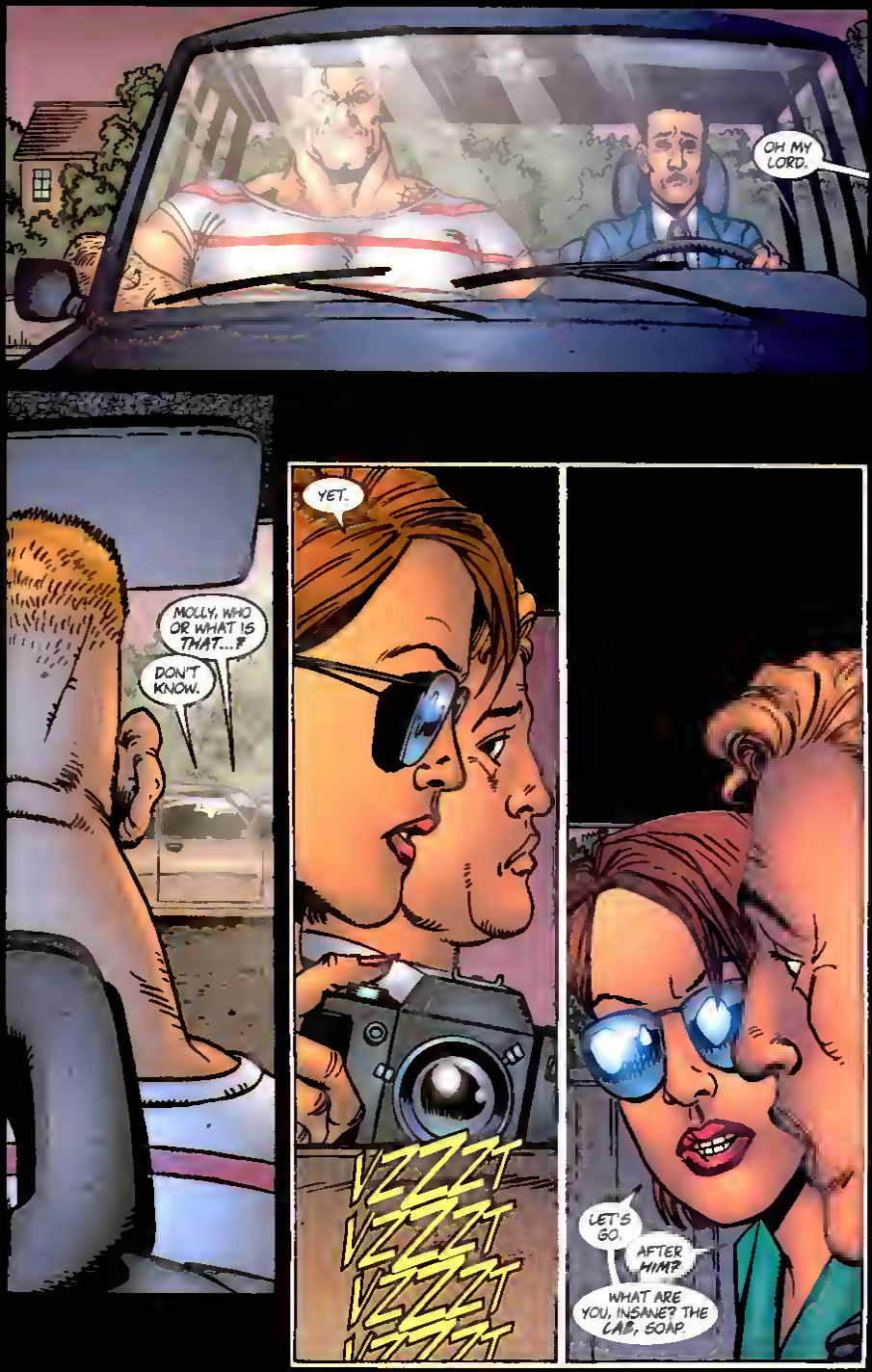

BIG SKULL IS COOL. HOW MUCH?
TEN MILLION.
OOOH. THE RUSSIAN COULD BUY MANY PAIRS OF LEVIS FOR THAT AMOUNT. MANY COMPACT DISCS.
IT IS A DEAL MA.
GLAD TO HEAR IT. HE'S HOLED UP IN AN APARTMENT BUILDING IN MANHATTAN. THESE TWO LOSERS WILL DRIVE YOU DOWN THERE.
M-M-MA? DOWN THERE?
MA, EVERYONE YOU'VE SENT TO GET MIM'S COME BACK IN A BODYBAG! WE DON'T EVEN KNOW WHICH APARTMENT HE'S IN, THE WHOLE PLACE IS A DEATHTRAP!


RELAX, BIG FELLA! YOU JUST DO THE DRIVING -- THE RUSSIAN WILL DO THE KILLING!
THEN WE GO FOR MILKSHAKES! HA HA HA HA!
BIG FELLA? MM?
HE'S.. HE'S...
HE'S DEAD...!
OOPS!
JUST YOU AND ME NOW, PARTNER!


YOU'VE BEEN TALKING TO MR BUMPO, HAVEN'T YOU, DAVE?
UH...
M-MR. SMITH, DON'T GET MAD, DUDE --!
I THOUGHT YOU KNEW HOW IMPORTANT IT WAS NOT TO TALK ABOUT THE PUNISHER. FOR YOUR OWN SAFETY AS MUCH AS MINE
Y-YEAH, BUT -- WE WERE LIKE TALKING, AND -- AND I MEAN THE WHOLE THING'S SO COOL I COULDN'T RESIST, I JUST HAD TO TELL HIM.
THOSE TWO GOOMBAHS TORE UP YOUR FACE FOR OVER AN HOUR AND YOU DIDN'T SAY WORD ONE, DAVE BUT YOU JUST HAD TO TELL MR BUMPO?
WELL, ISN'T IT SORT OF FAIR HE KNOWS? HE LIVES HERE, IT'S DANGEROUS FOR HIM TOO...
THAT'S WHY I'M LEAVING.


WHAT?
YOU CAN'T LEAVE, MR. SMITH!
I MEAN YOU BEING HERE, IT'S SO GREAT! IT'S THE COOLEST THING THAT'S EVER HAPPENED TO ME!
COULD YOU DROP BACK TO EARTH FOR A MINUTE, DAVE?
ME BEING HERE. IT ISN'T COOL. IT'S THE CLOSEST YOU'VE EVER COME TO GETTING KILLED.
IF I'M NOT OUT OF HERE BEFORE MA GNUCCI'S BOYS GET UP THE COURAGE TO COME BACK, THIS PLACE WILL BE A WARZONE. YOU'LL DIE IN THE CROSSFIRE. SO WILL JOAN AND MR BUMPO.
I SHOULD HAVE GONE A LONG TIME AGO
NOW, USUALLY WHEN I WANT SOMEONE TO KEEP THEIR MOUTH SHUT I THREATEN THEM AND LEAVE THEM IN TERROR FOR THEIR LIFE. BUT YOU'RE A GOOD KID AND YOU TOOK A LOT OF PAIN FOR ME YOU DON'T DESERVE THAT.
I'M JUST GOING TO TRUST YOU TO BE QUIET AND CALL IT EVEN, OKAY?
OKAY.

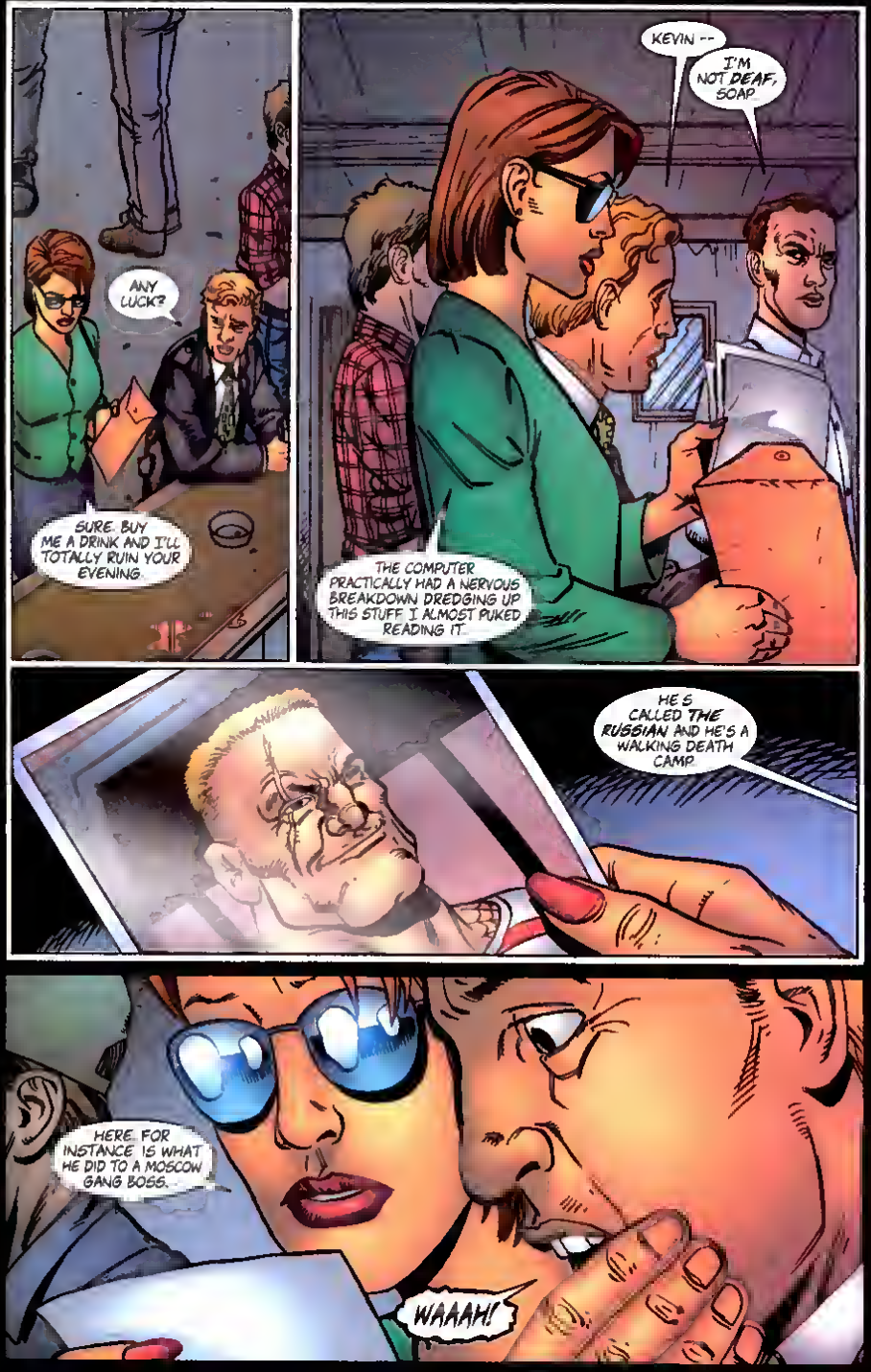

CAR COMING.
MM.
WHAT'S EATING YOU, SOAP?
OH, WHAT'S THE POINT.
WE'RE NEVER GOING TO GET ANYWHERE WITH THIS! I MEAN THE TWO OF US TRYING TO TAKE DOWN MA GNUCCI AND THE PUNISHER, COME ON...!
THIS SURVEILLANCE, ALL OF IT. IT'S A COMPLETE WASTE OF TIME.
DAILY BUGLE
MISSING RUSSIAN AIRLINER FOUND IN SWAMP
BODIES "PARTIALLY CONSUMED" SAY INVESTIGATORS
SOAP. QUIT MOANING.
LOOK AT THIS.

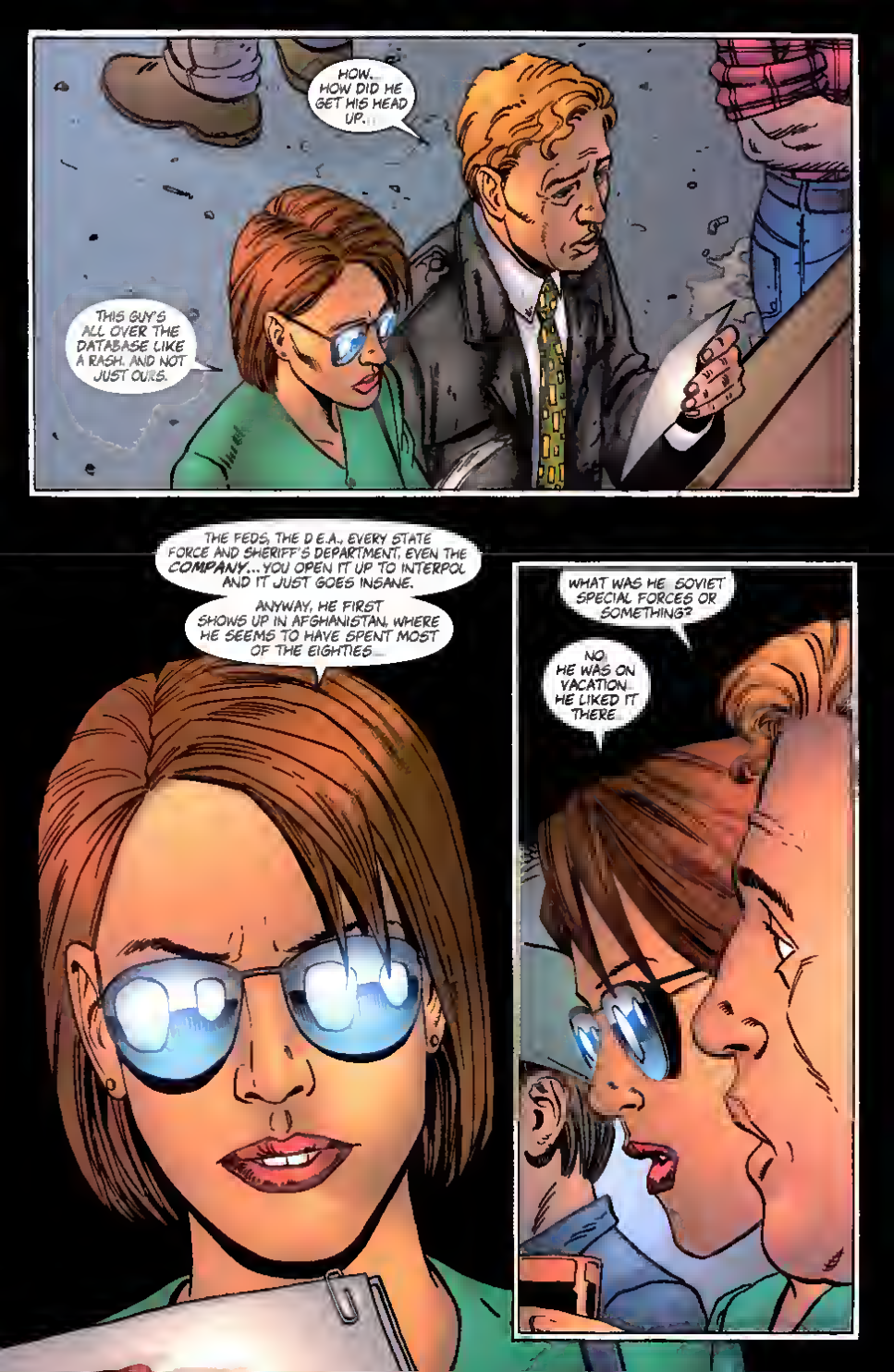

OH MY LORD.
MOLLY, WHO OR WHAT IS THAT...?
DON'T KNOW.
YET.
VZZZT VZZZT VZZZT VZZZT
LET'S GO.
AFTER HIM?
WHAT ARE YOU, INSANE? THE LAB, SOAP.


ARMED MEN STALK MANHATTAN. STREET JUSTICE OF THE MOST BRUTAL KIND IS METED OUT TO LAWBREAKERS BODYCOUNT IN THE HUNDREDS AND CLIMBING.
TONIGHT ON CITYWIDE, WE ASK— IS NEW YORK CAUGHT UP IN A VIGILANTE WAR?
THERE YEH ARE NOW, FATHER. I'LL JUST LEAVE YER COCOA ON THE TABLE FOR YEH.
GOODNIGHT, MRS. PEARSE.
ARE THE POLICE NOT DOING ENOUGH? HAVE CONCERNED CITIZENS TAKEN A STEP TOO FAR?
THE BEAUJENSTEINS ARE HERE, DEAR! THE BORDEAUX NEEDS OPENING!
BE RIGHT WITH YOU, DARLING...
HAS DUE PROCESS BEEN FORGOTTEN? CIVIL RIGHTS? IS PRAIRIE JUSTICE ENOUGH FOR NEW YORK CITY?


EAT UP, DOUGIE. PLENTY MORE
WHATEVER THE REASON, SOMETHING SENT THESE MASKED MURDERERS ABOUT THEIR BLOODY BUSINESS --
WUFF!
SOMETHING INSPIRED THE MYSTERY AXE-MURDERER OF SPANISH HARLEM...
SOMETHING MADE ELITE KILL AND MAIM HIS WAY ACROSS THE UPPER EAST SIDE...
SOMETHING LED MR. PAYBACK TO TURN HIS GUNS ON THE HARD-WORKING MEN AND WOMEN OF WALL STREET...
AND SOMETHING GAVE BIRTH TO THE ORIGINAL AND WORST -- THE MOST LETHAL OF THEM ALL -- THE KILLER WHOSE TERRIBLE RETURN BEGAN THIS DANCE OF DEATH --
THE PUNISHER


THIS GIVES ME AN IDEA...!
UH-HUH.


ANY LUCK?
SURE. BUY ME A DRINK AND I'LL TOTALLY RUIN YOUR EVENING.
KEVIN --
I'M NOT DEAF, SOAP.
THE COMPUTER PRACTICALLY HAD A NERVOUS BREAKDOWN DREDGING UP THIS STUFF. I ALMOST PUKED READING IT.
HE'S CALLED THE RUSSIAN AND HE'S A WALKING DEATH CAMP.
HERE. FOR INSTANCE. IS WHAT HE DID TO A MOSCOW GANG BOSS.
WAAAH!


HOW... HOW DID HE GET HIS HEAD UP.
THIS GUY'S ALL OVER THE DATABASE LIKE A RASH. AND NOT JUST OURS.
THE FEDS, THE D.E.A., EVERY STATE FORCE AND SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT, EVEN THE COMPANY... YOU OPEN IT UP TO INTERPOL AND IT JUST GOES INSANE.
ANYWAY, HE FIRST SHOWS UP IN AFGHANISTAN, WHERE HE SEEMS TO HAVE SPENT MOST OF THE EIGHTIES...
WHAT WAS HE, SOVIET SPECIAL FORCES OR SOMETHING?
NO. HE WAS ON VACATION. HE LIKED IT THERE.

"HE GOES EVERYWHERE THERE'S TROUBLE. HE THRIVES ON IT.

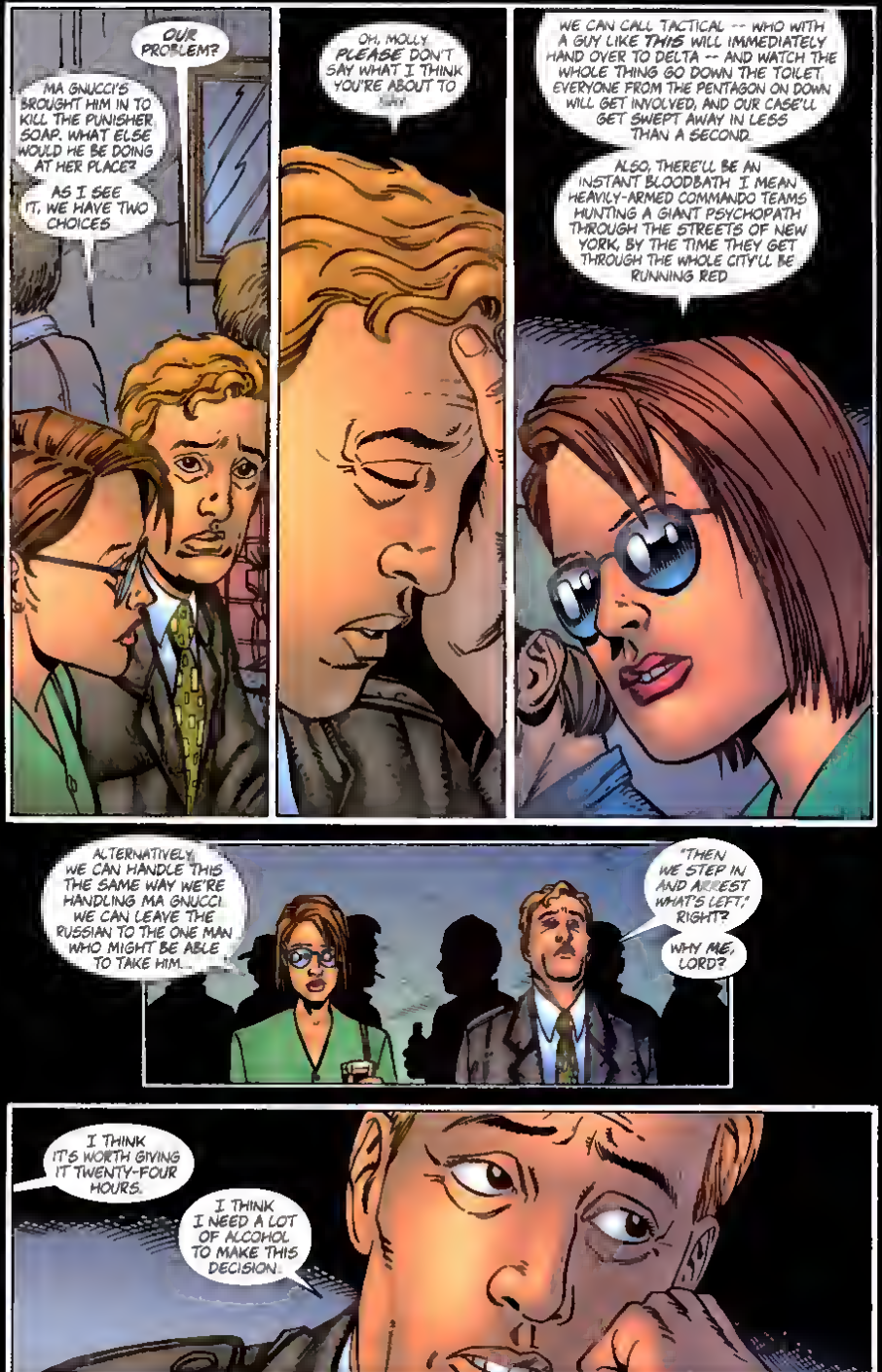
"THE LEBANON, IRAQ, RWANDA, EAST TIMOR... MONTH OR TWO IN CHECHNYA. LOT OF STUFF IN THE BALKANS... PERIODIC VISITS TO BELFAST, WHERE HE'S SUPPOSED TO HAVE EATEN A MAN FOR A ***BET***....

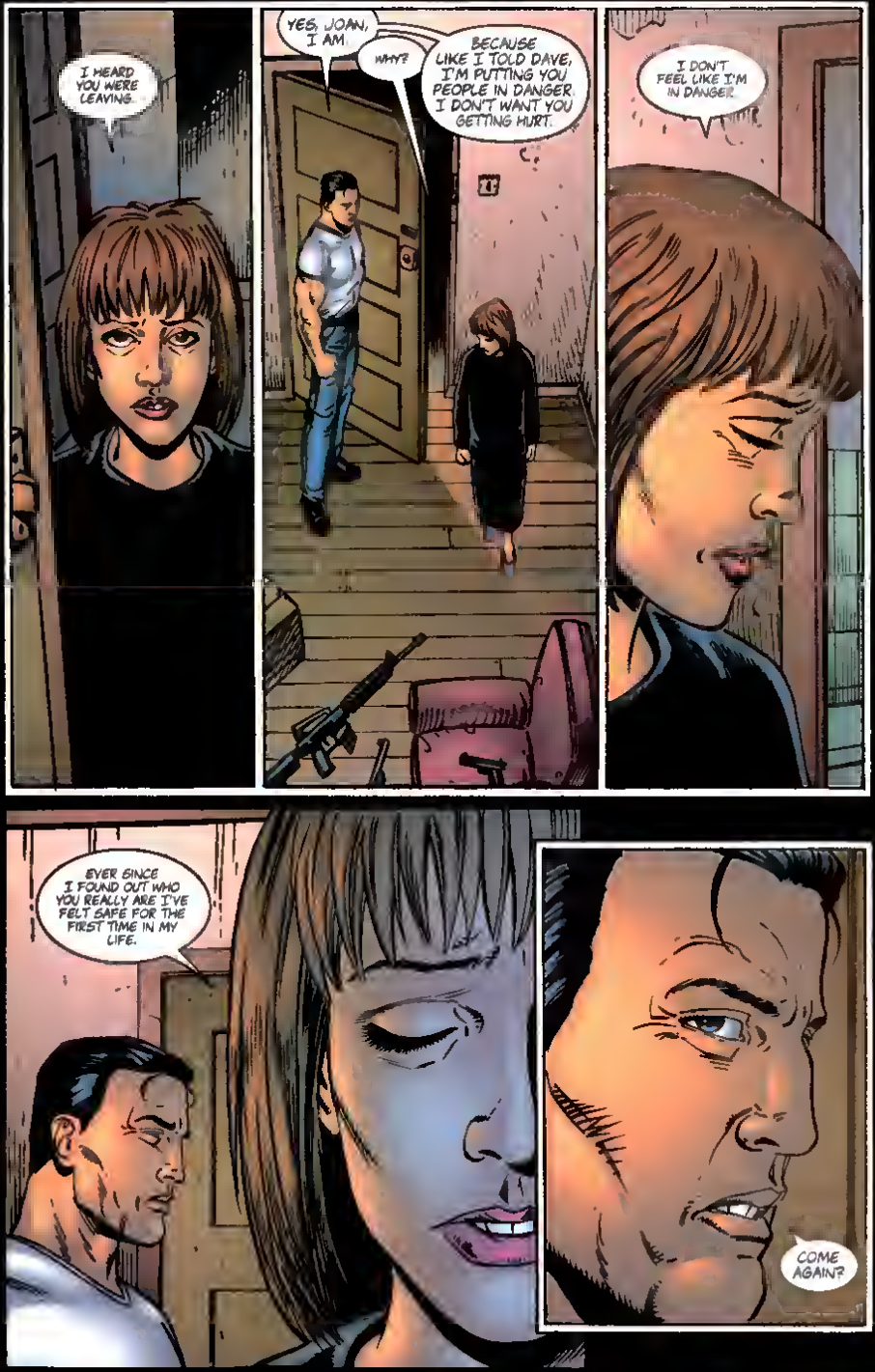
"THAT'S NOT COUNTING ORDINARY CRIMINAL ACTIVITY, WHICH BRINGS IN THE REST OF THE GLOBE. HE'S WORKED FOR EVERYONE FROM THE YAKUZA TO VEGAS P.D. -- AND THE MOB, OBVIOUSLY.

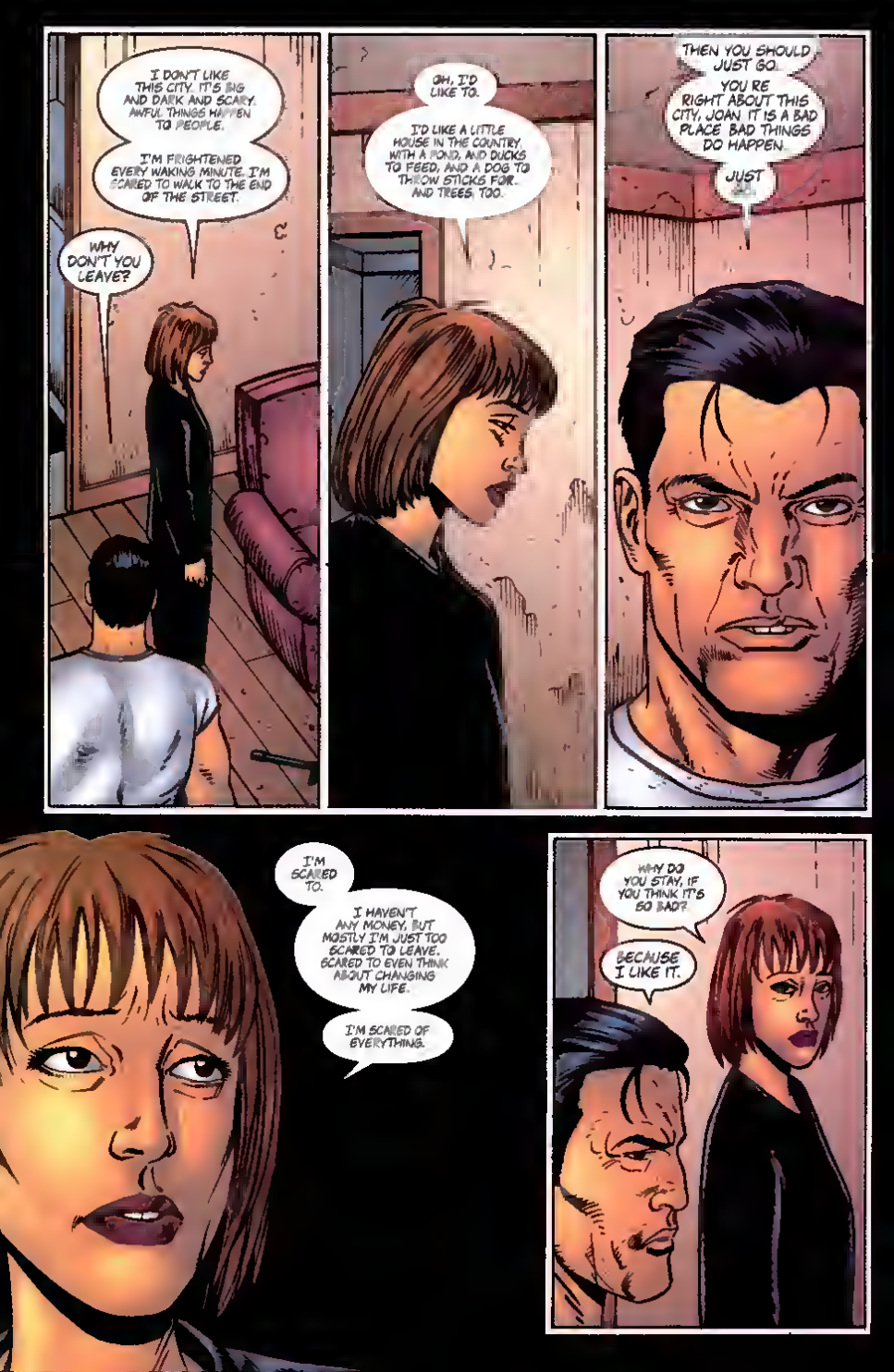
"SOMETIMES HE DOES IT FOR MONEY. SOMETIMES JUST FOR FUN. PRETTY MUCH ***EVERYBODY*** WANTS TO KILL HIM. AND NOW....

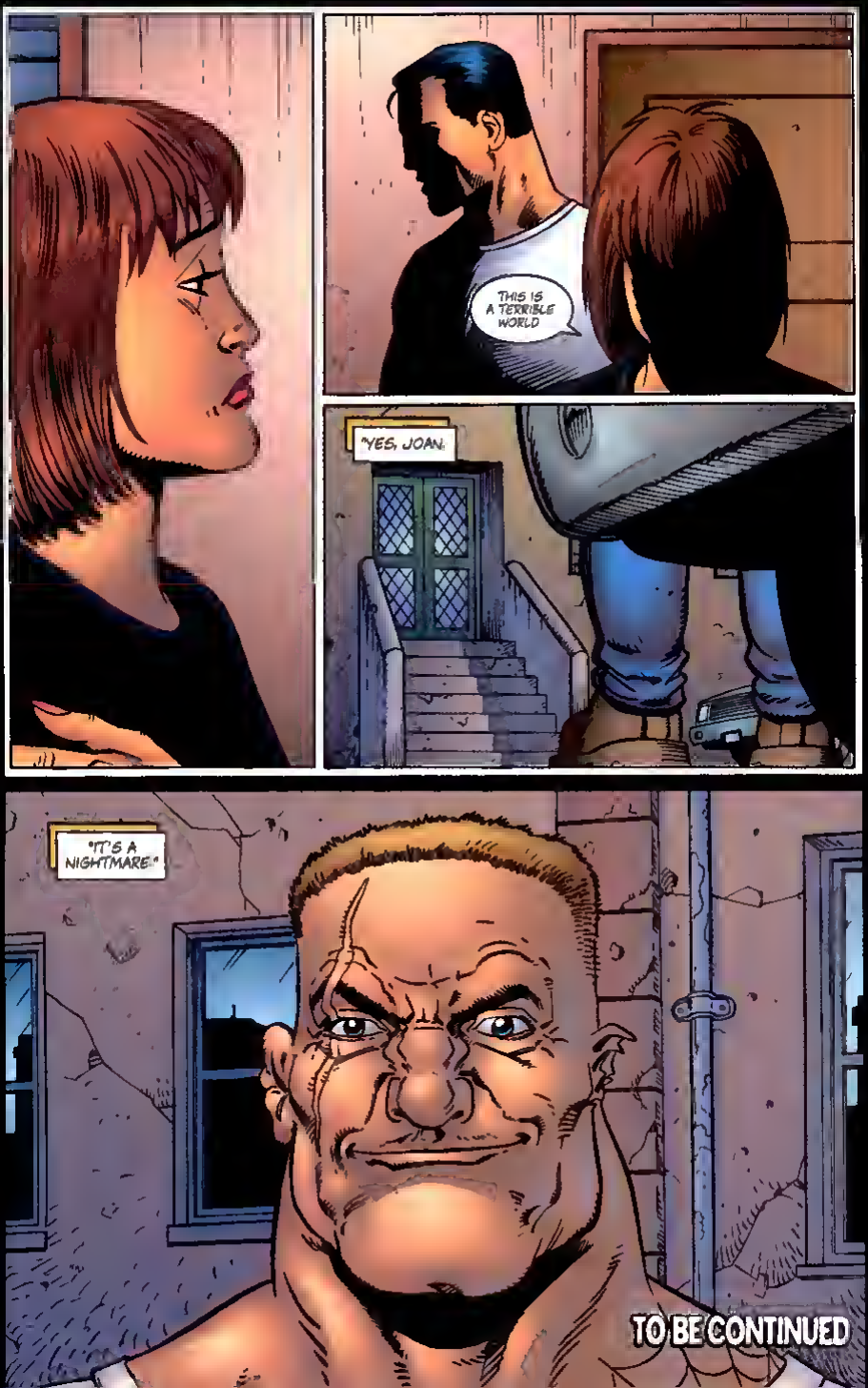


"NOW HE'S OUR PROBLEM."


OUR PROBLEM?
MA GNUCCI'S BROUGHT HIM IN TO KILL THE PUNISHER. SOAP. WHAT ELSE WOULD HE BE DOING AT HER PLACE?
AS I SEE IT, WE HAVE TWO CHOICES
OH, MOLLY. PLEASE DON'T SAY WHAT I THINK YOU'RE ABOUT TO
WE CAN CALL TACTICAL -- WHO WITH A GUY LIKE THIS WILL IMMEDIATELY HAND OVER TO DELTA -- AND WATCH THE WHOLE THING GO DOWN THE TOILET. EVERYONE FROM THE PENTAGON ON DOWN WILL GET INVOLVED, AND OUR CASE'LL GET SWEPT AWAY IN LESS THAN A SECOND.
ALSO, THERE'LL BE AN INSTANT BLOODBATH. I MEAN HEAVILY-ARMED COMMANDO TEAMS HUNTING A GIANT PSYCHOPATH THROUGH THE STREETS OF NEW YORK. BY THE TIME THEY GET THROUGH THE WHOLE CITY'LL BE RUNNING RED
ALTERNATIVELY, WE CAN HANDLE THIS THE SAME WAY WE'RE HANDLING MA GNUCCI. WE CAN LEAVE THE RUSSIAN TO THE ONE MAN WHO MIGHT BE ABLE TO TAKE HIM...
"THEN WE STEP IN AND ARREST WHAT'S LEFT," RIGHT?
WHY ME, LORD?
I THINK IT'S WORTH GIVING IT TWENTY-FOUR HOURS.
I THINK I NEED A LOT OF ALCOHOL TO MAKE THIS DECISION.


I HEARD YOU WERE LEAVING.
YES, JOAN, I AM.
WHY?
BECAUSE LIKE I TOLD DAVE, I'M PUTTING YOU PEOPLE IN DANGER. I DON'T WANT YOU GETTING HURT.
I DON'T FEEL LIKE I'M IN DANGER.
EVER SINCE I FOUND OUT WHO YOU REALLY ARE I'VE FELT SAFE FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MY LIFE.
COME AGAIN?


I DON'T LIKE THIS CITY. IT'S BIG AND DARK AND SCARY. AWFUL THINGS HAPPEN TO PEOPLE.
I'M FRIGHTENED EVERY WAKING MINUTE. I'M SCARED TO WALK TO THE END OF THE STREET.
WHY DON'T YOU LEAVE?
OH, I'D LIKE TO.
I'D LIKE A LITTLE HOUSE IN THE COUNTRY WITH A POND, AND DUCKS TO FEED, AND A DOG TO THROW STICKS FOR. AND TREES. TOO.
THEN YOU SHOULD JUST GO.
YOU'RE RIGHT ABOUT THIS CITY, JOAN. IT IS A BAD PLACE. BAD THINGS DO HAPPEN.
JUST
I'M SCARED TO.
I HAVEN'T ANY MONEY, BUT MOSTLY I'M JUST TOO SCARED TO LEAVE. SCARED TO EVEN THINK ABOUT CHANGING MY LIFE.
I'M SCARED OF EVERYTHING.
WHY DO YOU STAY, IF YOU THINK IT'S SO BAD?
BECAUSE I LIKE IT.


THIS IS A TERRIBLE WORLD
"YES, JOAN.
"IT'S A NIGHTMARE."
TO BE CONTINUED


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THE PLEX COUNCILLORS THINK YOU SHOULD RECONSIDER NOH VARR. THERE ARE BETTER WAYS TO INTRODUCE OUR PRESENCE TO AN UNKNOWN ALIEN CULTURE
THE PLEX GENERALS, ON THE OTHER HAND, ARE READY WITH OPPROBRIUM AND FULL TACTICAL SUPPORT
THE SHIP
THEIR ENGLISH
THIS?
NOH VARR, YOU KNOW EVERY WORD IN THEIR LANGUAGE
TOO BAD I HAVE TO STICK TO THE SIMPLE ONES THEY UNDERSTAND
I WARNED THEM.
IN THE NAME OF ALL OUR MURDERED COMRADES, I HEREBY DECLARE WAR.

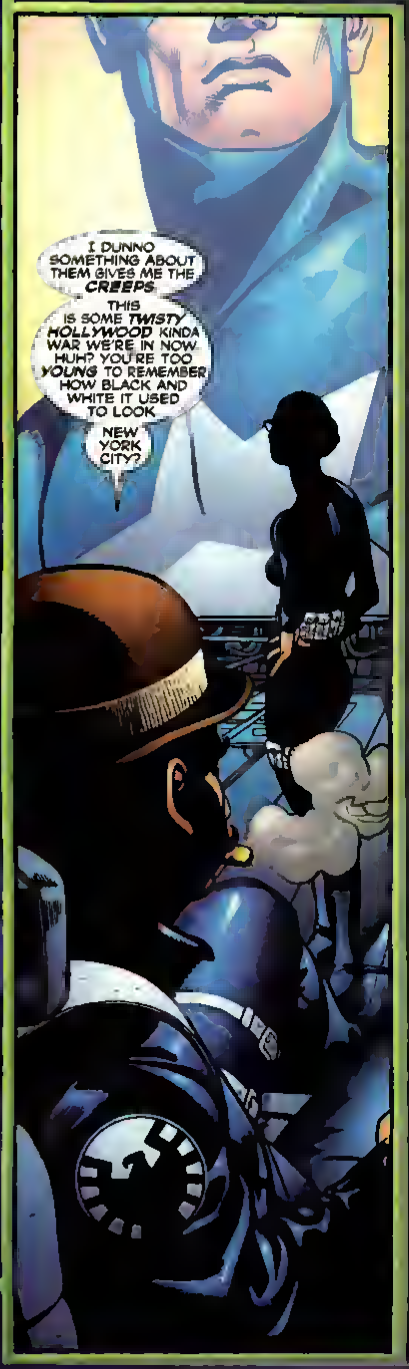


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S.H.I.E.L.D. GLOBAL SECURITY: BLACKLIGHT OPS
OMPHALOS' ORBITER
DIRECTOR DUGAN.. WE HAVE AN UPDATE ON THAT SITUATION IN NEW YORK CITY
THE ORBITER IS WAY OUT OF RANGE FOR THE NEXT FEW HOURS AND THERE'S PRESSURE ON YOU TO AUTHORIZE A UNITED NATIONS FIRST-STRIKE OPTION.
WOO-HAH.
PUT THE COMMERCIAL UP ON SCREEN ONE.
LEMME SEE WHAT THE SECURITY COUNCIL IS SELLING THIS WEEK.


WELCOME TO TOMORROW!
A TIME OF UNCERTAINTY. A TIME OF CHANGE
A TIME FOR FIRST STRIKE GLOBAL SECURITY!
OUR WORLD HAS ALTERED BEYOND IMAGINING SINCE CAPTAIN AMERICA CARRIED A NATION'S HOPES INTO BATTLE. BUT HIS STIRRING LEGACY ENDURES...
INTRODUCING STATE-OF-THE-ART HOTHOUSE CLONE SUPERSOLDIER TE-
BRAINS NEURO-IMPRINTED WITH U.N. DIRECTIVES! THREE BASIC PERSONALITY INTERACTION MODES! ADAMANTIUM LACING! GAMMA-ENHANCED FUNCTION!
THE UNITED NATIONS BANNERMEN
STANDARD-BEARERS OF THE NEW E-ITE!
POLICING THE 21ST CENTURY!


GEEZ. I ONLY ASKED...
HOW MUCH?
THE SIX BILLION DOLLAR MEN TEN MINUTES USE EQUALS THE NATIONAL DEBT OF HONDURAS
EACH.
THE PLUS SIDE IS 'RAPID METABOLISM GUARANTEES RAPID RESULTS' ACCORDING TO THE HARD COPY


I DUNNO SOMETHING ABOUT THEM GIVES ME THE CREEPS.
THIS IS SOME TWISTY HOLLYWOOD KINDA WAR WE'RE IN NOW. HUH? YOU'RE TOO YOUNG TO REMEMBER HOW BLACK AND WHITE IT USED TO LOOK.
NEW YORK CITY?


WAKOOM
THE UN BUILDING IS BEACH
HE'S TEARING DOWN MIDTOWN LIKE IT'S CHRISTMAS DECORATIONS IN JANUARY AND WE HAVE NO AVENGERS, FF OR NOBODY IN TOWN.
WHO IS THIS KID?
WHAT DOES HE WANT?
DIRECTOR DUGAN, SIR, WE HAVE NO IDEA BUT HE'S SERIOUS ON THE SCALE OF THE BOMBING OF HAMBURG.
WHICH I REMEMBER AND YOU DON'T.
DO THESE CREEPY GUYS FLY?
SIR
DO MAGGOTS DEVOUR THE DEAD? YOU SAW THE AD: THEY'LL MAKE YOUR BREAKFAST AND WALK THE DOG
OKAY BUT WE TAKE THE KID ALIVE
AUTHORIZE AND DEPLOY


WE'RE STEERING HUGE MASSES OF PEOPLE AS THOUGH THEY'RE ONE ORGANISM.
THEIR MINDS CONNECTED ON A PRIMITIVE LEVEL.
ELECTRONICS - MUSIC - VIDEO
SALE
THEY'LL GO WHERE TH OMNIWAVE PUSHE
maxell
NEW YORK
THEY'LL DO WHAT THE OMNIWAVE WANTS


PLEX! KEEP IT COMING! I'M PLAYING THEM LIKE A FLUTE
OMNIWAVE BUBBLE IS TEN MILE WIDE BUT I CAN ONLY TAP ENOUGH POWER TO MAINTAIN FIELD VIABILITY FOR ANOTHER FIFTEEN MINUTES LOCAL
UNTIL THEN I CAN FEEL EVERY STONE AND HEARTBEAT WITHIN
THREE OF THEM PENETRATING THE FIELD
I DON'T HAVE TIME FOR THIS
GET OUT OF THERE MON-VARR!


KRUMP
I TOOK THREE WEAPONS FROM THE ARCHIVE
CHECK THE INVENTORY. TELL ME WHAT A 'POCKET BATTLEFIELD' DOES
I DON'T NEED INVENTORY
REMEMBER STAR SPLENDOR STOLE THE CUBE FROM THE PINK PANTHEON AFTER THE MATTER FAY MALFUNCTIONED AND CLONED THE ENTIRE MACROVERSE?
ARE YOU KIDDING? WHAT DOES IT DO?
WELL, FIRST IT EXPANDS
THE MANUAL READS LIKE TENTH-DIMENSIONESE
NINE DEFAULT ENVIRONMENTAL MODES YES THE BATTLEFIELD AND ALL WITH HERS OWN SELF-CONTAINED PHYSICS
SOUNDS ABOUT RIGHT


YOU WOULDN'T HAVE HEARD THAT BUT IN DUMBSPEAK THE MEANING'S TRANSPARENT NOTHING BEHAVES AS IT SHOULD IN HERE
IS DOWN AND SILENCE IS SOUND AND YOU'RE IN TROUBLE DEEP
DRAAK
UNKNOWN EXPERIENCE STOP CONFUSING ME!
NUUHH!
MY SHIELD IS BROKEN! MY SENSES DISORDERED. I AM AFRAID!
BANNERMAN WHITE
ACCESS COMBAT SIMULATION MODULE 010RANGE013TOP


WHUUTT!
THEM POCKET BATT... IDS DO MAKE INTERFACE WITH UNCON...IOUS SENSES OF YOU TO MAKE COMPENSATES FOR THE PHYSICAL DISTORTIONS WHILN SAMETIME DISABLE ENEMY"
GETTING ...OF THIS NUH-UA... WE CAN
STOP READING THE MANUAL! I CAN WORK IT OUT BY DOING IT!
THERE'S ONLY ONE OF THEM LEFT
SO YOU GOT LUCKY
NOW YOUR LUCK HAS RUN OUT
I ONLY HAVE TO HYPERVENTILATE ACCORDING TO DIRECTIVE 0940: BLOOD PRESSURE RISES... HEARTRATE ACCELERATES...
STRESS HORMONES FLOOD BODY
MAAUUYY!
GAMMA ENHANCE... GAMMA HAA UU
OORRMMMMM
SHRIIPP...!


MODE 3!
BANNERMAN SMASH!
BANNERMAN KILL!


UNNH...
BANNERMAN SMASH!
?
URRN
NNUUHH
NOT ENEMY! NOT VIOLATE DIRECTIVE! OKO MODE OO!
PACIFY AND FRATERNIZE!


PACIFY AND FRATERNIZE...
THE OMNIWAVE BROUGHT THEM HERE RIGHT WHERE YOU WANTED THEM
JUST SAY THE WORD
SEE ALREADY HOW THAT HEART-BEAT SLOWS LIKE AN OLD COFFIN-JOCKEY'S CLOCK.
AND SOON WE'LL SEE YOU CALM. AND SMALL.
STRIKE!
WHUMM!!


ANY MORE?
ONLY REGULAR PEOPLE.
SO I CAN FINISH WITHOUT INTERRUPTION?
WHAT IS THIS ? WHAT ARE YOU MAKING US STAND HERE FOR ?
BECAUSE IT WAS THE LIKES OF YOU AND THIS WHOLE MURKY, HYPOCRITE RACE WHO POWDERIZED MY GUILTLESS CREWMATES FOR NO REASON BETTER THAN PROFIT AND IGNORANCE.
SO WAR.
PARK
ALL RIGHT
PLEX!
I'M ON MY WAY HOME RIGHT AFTER THE GRAND FINALE
RCA
WHAT HAVE YOU DONE, ANH-VARR
I'VE GIVEN THEM A TATTOO.
I'M TIRED NOW GET THE TV READY
ALL CHANNELS SIMULTANEOUSLY FROM THE 999,999 KNOWN WAVE-BANDS IN THE PARALLEL REALITY SPECTRUM.

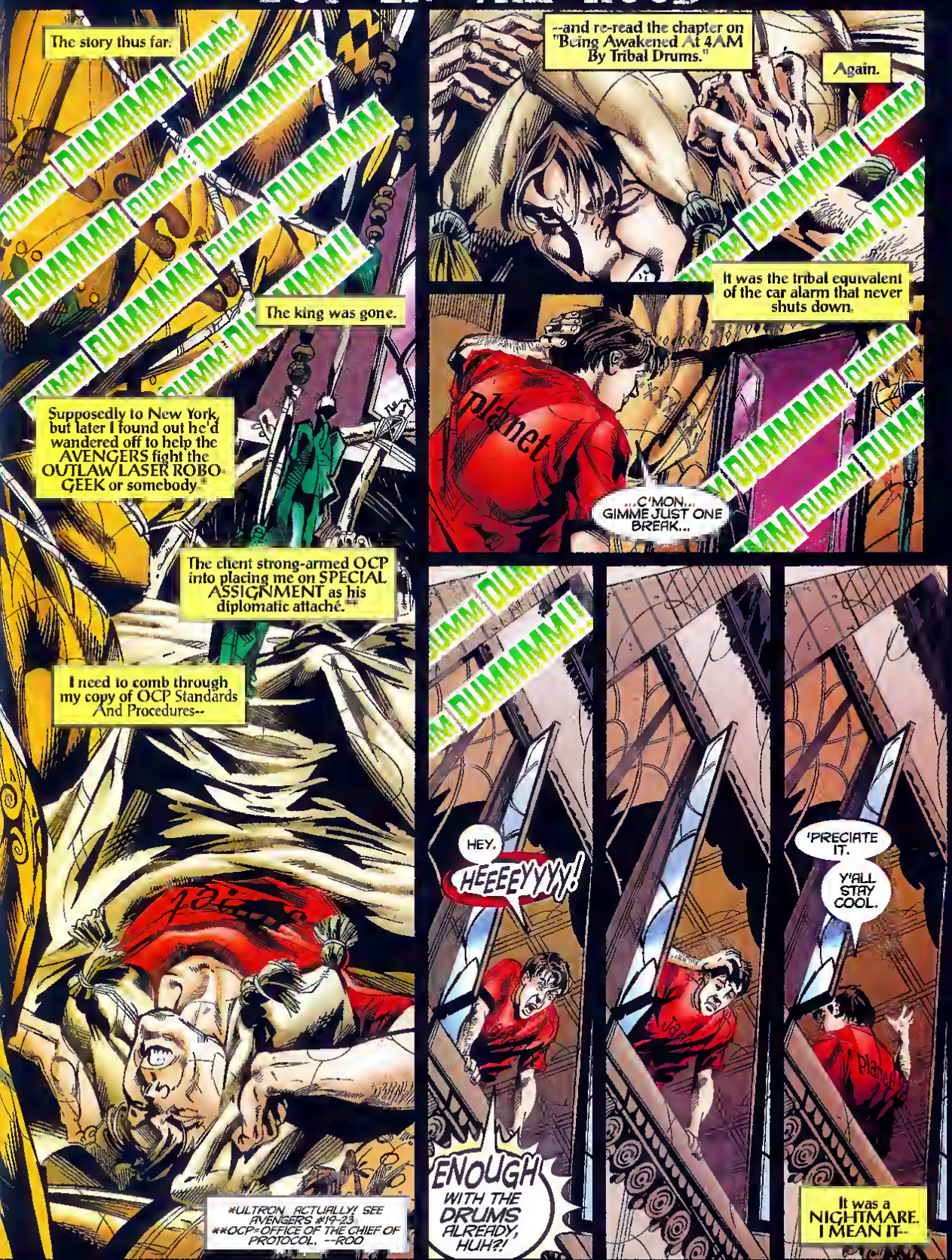

NOTABLE FACT... ZERO FATALITIES.
AND INTELLIGENCE FROM THE BANNER MAN RECOVERY SITE SEEMS TO SUGGEST HE THINKS WE'RE RESPONSIBLE FOR KILLING HIS FRIENDS.
OR HIS PEOPLE
HIS PEOPLE?..
WHO KILLED WHAT PEOPLE?
I GOT A BAD FEELING WE'RE SEEING THE START OF SOMETHING. CHECK THE REGISTER FOR ALIEN LANDINGS AND GIMME SATELLITE ON NEW YORK
BLIP
SEE HOW IT'S ALL REGULAR LINES AND CURVES
YOU KNOW WHAT I THINK? HE'S GOT PEOPLE AND BUILDINGS ARRANGED IN PATTERNS THERE SEE?
I KNEW SOMETHING WAS WEIRD


HOLY...
...LETTERS...
...GIGANTIC LETTERS...
"Y"
"O"
OH-KAY...
THERE'S MORE DIRECTOR DUGAN
YEAH I'LL BET THERE IS
WHATEVER HAPPENED TO GOOD OLD "TAKE ME TO YOUR LEADER"?

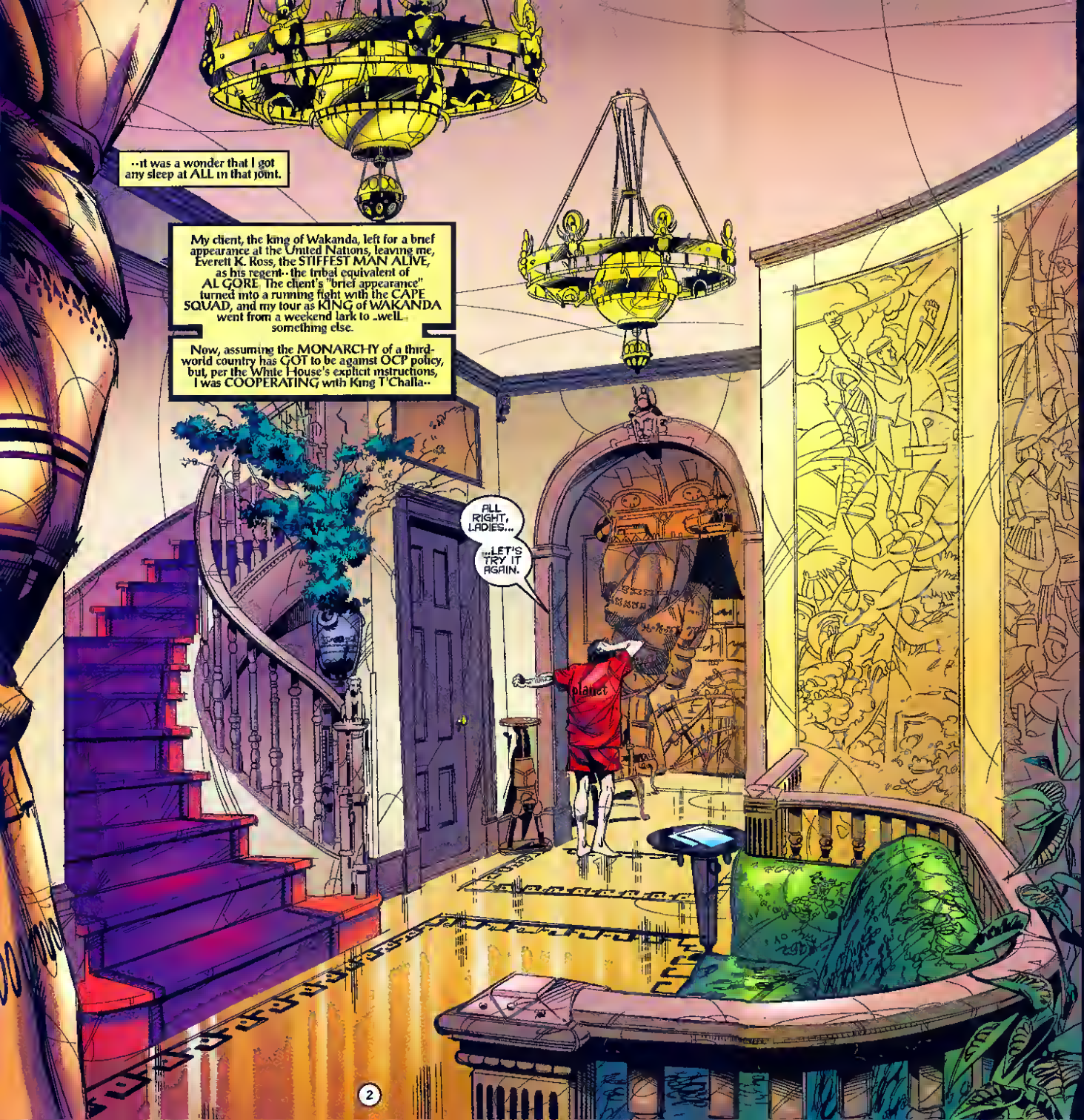

GOT 'EM! TV ON.
marvel
boy
NEXT ISSUE
YOU WANT IT!
YOU NEED IT!
YOU CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT IT!
DIGITAL KONCENTRATION KAMP ONE!


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BOY IN THE HOOD



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..it was a wonder that I got any sleep at ALL in that joint.
My client, the king of Wakanda, left for a brief appearance at the United Nations, leaving me, Everett K. Ross, the STIFFEST MAN ALIVE, as his regent-- the tribal equivalent of AL GORE. The client's "brief appearance" turned into a running fight with the CAPE SQUAD, and my tour as KING of WAKANDA went from a weekend lark to ..well.. something else.
Now, assuming the MONARCHY of a third-world country has GOT to be against OCP policy, but, per the White House's explicit instructions, I was COOPERATING with King T'Challa--
ALL RIGHT, LADIES...
...LET'S TRY IT AGAIN.
planet


..no matter WHAT the SACRIFICE.
NOT QUITE SO MUCH AIR THIS TIME, OKAY?
OH, AND LADIES--MAYBE SOMETHING FROM JETHRO TULL--THEIR BAROQUE PERIOD---
Let me TELL you, Nikki--it was TORTURE.

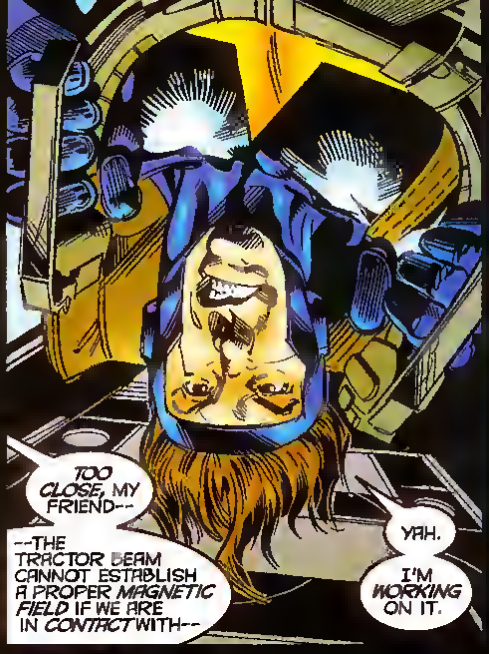

I'd fully intended to file a COMPLAINT with EEOC when I got back.*
*EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY COMMISSION --ROO


Of course, that was BEFORE I found out I was about to be KILLED.
But, I'm getting AHEAD of myself again...


With the sleekness of the jungle cat whose name he bears, T-Challa - King of Wakanda stalks both the concrete city and the undergrowth of the Veldt. So it has been for countless generations of warrior kings, so it is today, and so it shall be for the law of the jungle dictates that only the swift, the smart, and the strong survive! Noble champion, vigilant protector Stan Lee Presents:
BLACK PANTHER
...I mean, first, I really need to explain about the PLANE CRASH...
TURBULENCE
Priest & Sal Velluto
writer - storytellers - penciler
Bob Almond / inker - Brad Vancata / colorist
Shanefont and P.T. / letterer
Ruben Diaz / editor - Bob Harras / editor-in-chief
Special Thanks to Dave Donelen and Greg Morrow, Ph.D. for Tech Assistance

KING OF LEOTARDS



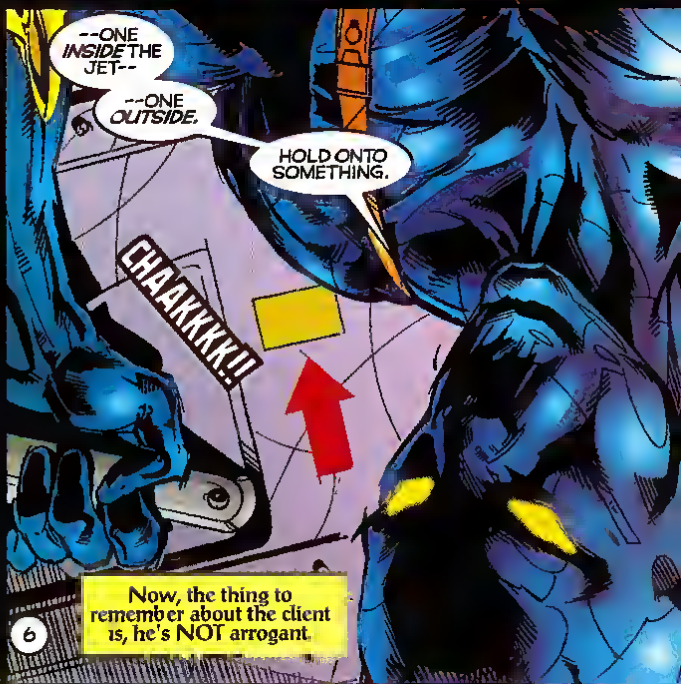

TOO CLOSE, MY FRIEND--
--THE TRACTOR BEAM CANNOT ESTABLISH A PROPER MAGNETIC FIELD IF WE ARE IN CONTACT WITH--
YAH.
I'M WORKING ON IT.


HOW'S THIS--?
EXCELLENT, MY YOUNG FRIEND.
STAND BY FOR DE-PRESSURI-ZATION.


O--H--
SO WHAT'S OUR MOVE?
WE DON'T REALLY KNOW HOW MANY TERRORISTS ARE ON BOARD, SO MAYBE WE SHOULD--
NOT "WE," JUSTICE--


--THIS HIJACKING WAS A SUMMONS.
MEANT FOR ME ALONE.
EXCUSE ME FOR SAYING SO, PANTHER, BUT ISN'T THAT, WELL, A LITTLE ARROGANT?


I MEAN, NO OFFENSE, BUT WON'T TWO OF US HAVE A BETTER CHANCE OF SAVING LIVES?
YES, ABSOLUTELY--

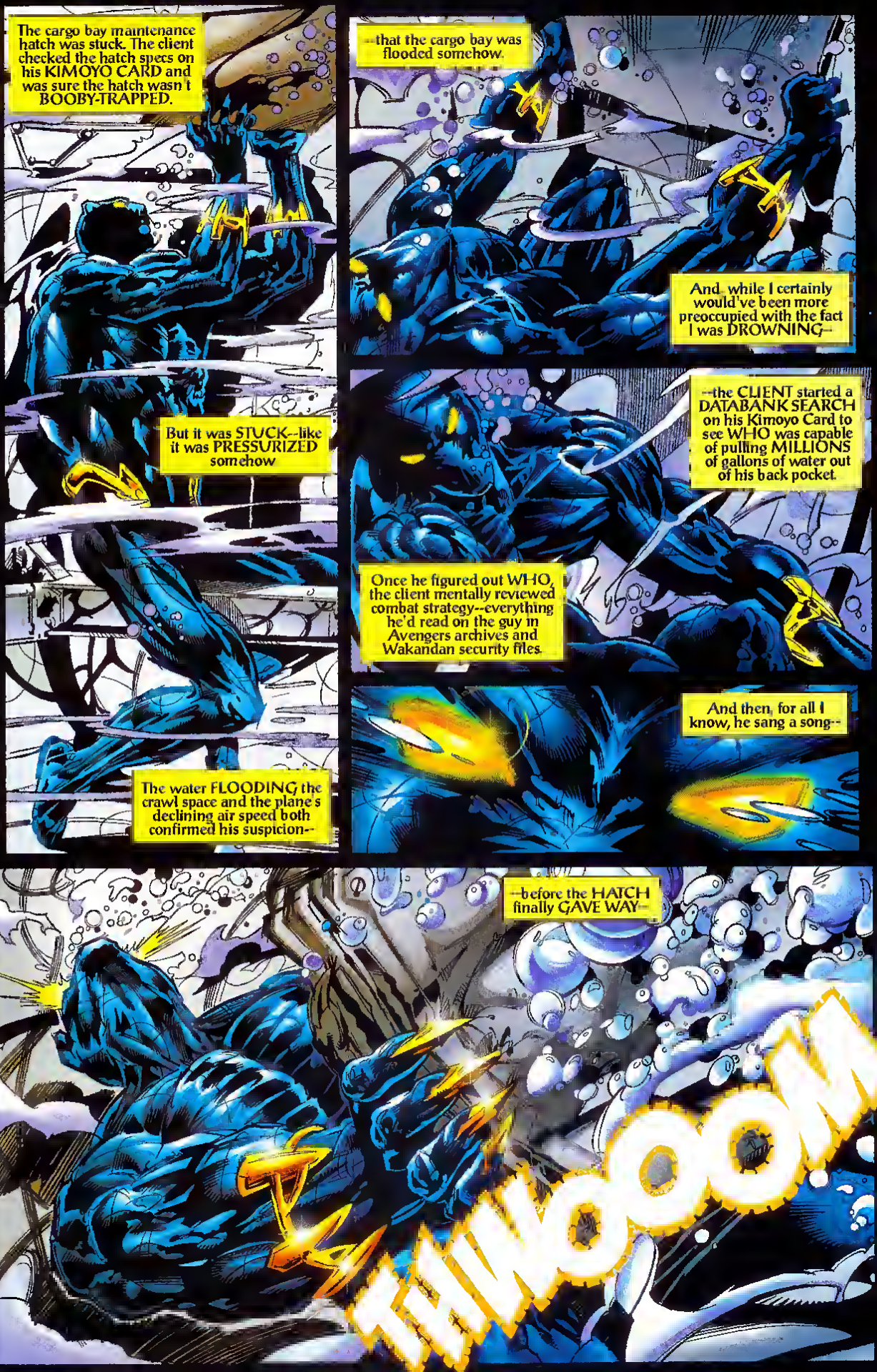

--ONE INSIDE THE JET--
--ONE OUTSIDE.
HOLD ONTO SOMETHING.
CHAAKKK!!
Now, the thing to remember about the client is, he's NOT arrogant.


I mean, yeah, in cold type he comes across a little Clint Eastwood. But remember, the guy is from AFRICA.
THWACK
He talks in this gentle, lyrical sing-song, like he's gonna bust into a chorus of "Don't Worry, Be Happy!"
And he's ALWAYS being SINCERE. If he says, "Make my day," he literally means just that.
FFWOOOOOSHH
--AAACKK!!
He wasn't treating Justice like a dumb kid, though that may have been how it seemed.
Justice was an AVENGER. The client had the HIGHEST respect for him.
The client KNEW that.
The SOLES of the client's BOOTS had some manner of Vibranium-powered ACTIVE PHASE RESONATOR or something.
Justice had vast telekinetic powers and could survive being sucked out of an airlock at 35,000 feet.
Basically, he could scale walls like a CAT, and leap from great heights.
The client's CLAWS were made of the "Anti-Metal" Vibranium alloy, which could break down other metals on contact.
So, between his HANDS and his FEET--
--the client actually COULD crawl along the belly of an in-flight jumbo jet--
MOVE THE QUINJET INTO A PARALLEL COURSE--WE SHALL REQUIRE YOUR HELP IN *RECOVERY* EFFORTS
PLEASE MAINTAIN RADIO SILENCE


BET HE KNOWS WHERE ELVIS IS, TOO
As acting KING of sorts, my day was filled with tedious busywork
Somehow, Prince Charles made this look a lot more glamorous.
That, or the locals were having some FUN at MY EXPENSE.
>YAWN<
I NEED A BREAK, RAKEISHA--TAKE FIVE.
...MUST BE A TV REMOTE IN HERE SOMEWHERE--
GALACTUS CONTINGENCY MEASURES & PROCEDURES
--?!
YOU'VE GOT TO BE KIDDING ME.
REGENT--PLEASE EXCUSE THIS INTERRUPTION--
W'KABI--THIS IS A JOKE, RIGHT--? YOU HAVE CONTINGENCY PLANS IN CASE GALACTUS SHOWS UP--?
DOESN'T EVERYONE, MY LORD?
OH, SURE, YOU MEAN, "IN CASE OF ATTACK BY PLANET-EATER, BREAK GLASS AND PULL LEVER--?!"
MY LORD--YOU MUST PREPARE FOR THE HUNT. IT IS NEARLY TIME.
"--FORM A SINGLE LINE AND EXIT THE PLANET IN AN ORDERLY FASHION--?!" I MEAN, C'MON--
-IF GALACTUS COMES BACK, WHAT CAN THIS LITTLE COUNTRY DO THAT--ER--THAT--
THAT "DEVELOPED" NATIONS CAN'T?
--AH--
--WHAT HUNT--?
8

PAGING JAMES CAMERON




The cargo bay maintenance hatch was stuck. The client checked the hatch specs on his KIMOYO CARD and was sure the hatch wasn't BOOBY-TRAPPED.
But it was STUCK--like it was PRESSURIZED somehow
The water FLOODING the crawl space and the plane's declining air speed both confirmed his suspicion--
--that the cargo bay was flooded somehow.
And, while I certainly would've been more preoccupied with the fact I was DROWNING--
--the CLIENT started a DATABANK SEARCH on his Kimoyo Card to see WHO was capable of pulling MILLIONS of gallons of water out of his back pocket.
Once he figured out WHO, the client mentally reviewed combat strategy--everything he'd read on the guy in Avengers archives and Wakandan security files.
And then, for all I know, he sang a song--
--before the HATCH finally GAVE WAY--
THWOOOM


Seeing how this was a JET and not a SUBMARINE, you could imagine the client's surprise--
--to find a VORTEX yanking him up into the cargo bay
--where the WATER ITSELF tried to KILL him.
Now, me? The first thing I'd have done was WET myself.
I mean, who'd even NOTICE, right?
But the client? Well, he told me the first thing HE did was CHARGE his CAT SUIT with STATIC ELECTRICITY.


The static burst electrolyzed the water, which I'd guess HAD to hurt--
--if you happened to be a guy made out of water.
Like, for instance--
HYDRO-MAN
YOU'RE GOOD.
SURRENDER AT ONCE.
ZZZMMM!
ZZZMMM!
ZZZMMM!
YOU BET, PANTHER--
--THE MINUTE I KILL YOU--
--RAM THIS JET INTO THE WHITE HOUSE--
--AND GET MY CHECK.
FWWOOOOSHH
And then Hydro-Man was GONE.
I mean, not ONE DROP of water was left in the bay.


HEYYY--!!
CRASH
The client told me it wasn't even DAMP.
This guy could show up, DROWN you, VANISH, and take every drop of moisture WITH him.
He'd make one HECK of a dry cleaner...
PANTHER--THE JET'S CHANGING COURSE--HEADING BACK TOWARDS LAND--!!
YOU BEAT THE GUY THAT QUICK--?
NOT YET.
I WILL REQUIRE ABOUT FOUR MINUTES LONGER, JUSTICE.
PLEASE ADVISE AUTHORITIES ON THE GROUND AND RETURN TO RADIO SILENCE.
BUT...
THANK YOU, JUSTICE--
--PANTHER OUT.
---?!
SIR...SIR... YOU'RE NOT ALLOWED IN THE SERVICE ELEVATOR--
I UNDER-STAND PLEASE FORGIVE ME--
--BUT I WISH TO AVOID ALARMING THE PASSENGERS UNTIL IT IS ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY.
?!! ARE YOU--ARE YOU A HIJACKER--?!?
NO. I AM KING OF A SMALL AFRICAN NATION.
SOMEONE HAS ORDERED THE DESTRUCTION OF THIS JET TO MAKE A POLITICAL STATEMENT.


I--I'LL ALERT THE PILOT--
THE PILOTS ARE DEAD.
IF MY GUESS IS CORRECT, THIS PLANE HAS NO FUEL EITHER.
HOWEVER, DO NOT BE ALARMED


I MUST ASK YOU GENTLEMEN TO SURRENDER YOUR WEAPONS.
--?! ARE YOU NUTS? WHY--?
TO PREVENT HYDRO-MAN FROM TAKING CONTROL OF YOUR BODIES AND USING THEM TO KILL GAPON.

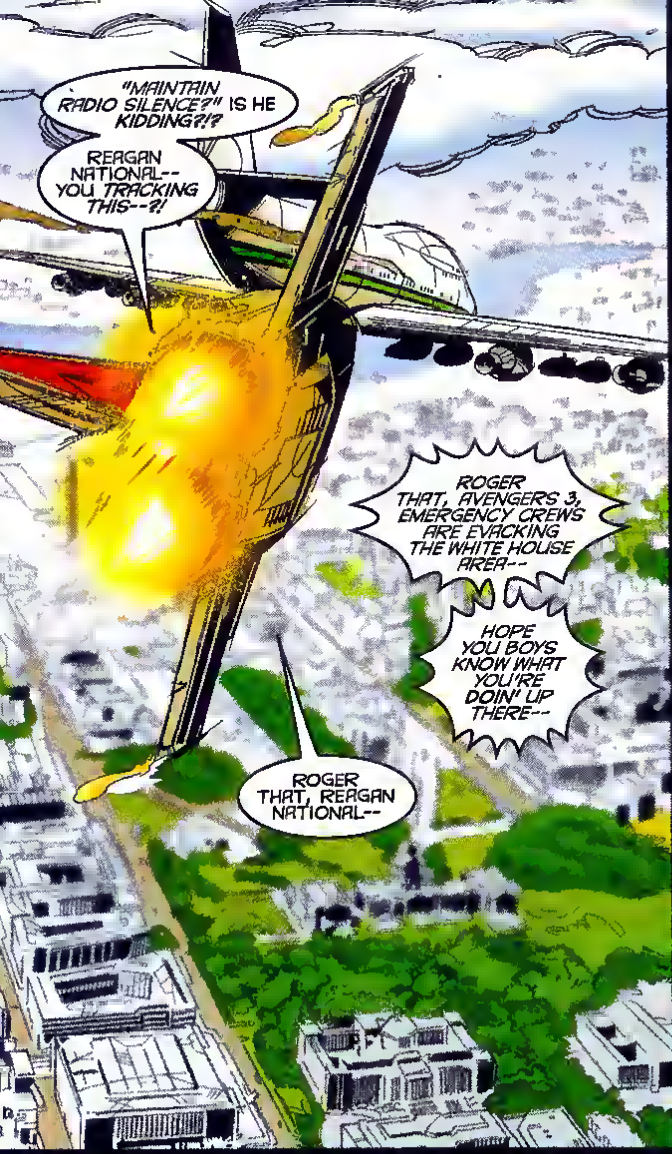

<YOU'VE REALLY LOST IT, HAVEN'T YOU, PANTHER?>
<SHOOTING UP MY DELI--KIDNAPPING ME--TURNING ME OVER TO THE U.N.-->*
<WHEN WILL IT BE ENOUGH?>
*TRANSLATED FROM RUSSIAN. ISSUE #9 & 10. --ROO


<THE MAN WHO FINANCED THE OVERTHROW OF MY KINGDOM IS WORTHY OF NEITHER RESPECT NOR SYMPATHY.>
<SOMEONE HAS HIRED HYDRO-MAN TO MAKE A VERY PROFOUND STATEMENT, GAPON-->
14


<--WHICH MAKES YOUR SURVIVAL THE LEAST OF MY CONCERNS-->
GENTLEMEN, YOU MUST TRUST ME--PLEASE SURRENDER YOUR WEAPONS--

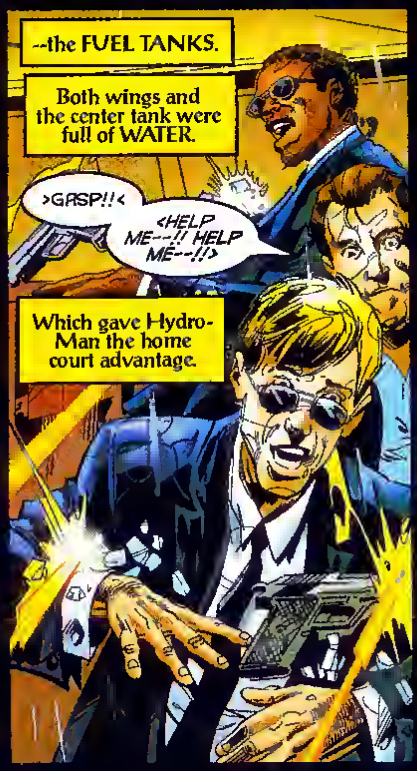

--AND CAN ADD WATER TO HIS OWN MASS AND CONTROL EVERY OUNCE OF IT WITH SURGICAL PRECISION.
A GUN CAN ONLY AID SUCH AN ADVERSARY...
FRRRAHZZZZ!!
--FOR THE SAFETY OF ALL ONBOARD.
HYDRO-MAN CAN CONVERT HIMSELF TO WATER IN ALL OF ITS KNOWN FORMS--
POWWWW
YEEEAHARRGGHH!!!
--WHO, IDEALLY, SHOULD BE DEALT WITH SWIFTLY--
--AND SEVERELY.
KKEEE-RAKK!
GHAAAKK--!!
The client's ENERGY DAGGER electrolyzed Hydro-Man, making Hydie much more deckable.
15


But it was, at best, a BEE STING to a RHINO
CRUD-- THEY TOLD ME YOU WERE A PIECE OF WORK PANTHER--!!
BLAAM!!
BLAAM!!
BLAAM!!
BLAAM!!
WHO, PRECISELY, ARE "THEY," HYDRO-MAN--?
BLAAM!!
BLAAM!!
BLAAM!!
BLAAM!!
WHAT'S IT
BY THE TIME I GOT THE GIG, IT WAS PASSED THROUGH SO MANY HANDS HOW WOULD I KNOW?
JUST AS LONG AS YOU GET SMEARED--
BLAAM!!
--THE RUSKIE GETS DEAD--
--AND THE CHECK CLEARS--
--NOTHIN' ELSE HAS ANY-THING TO DO WITH ME!!

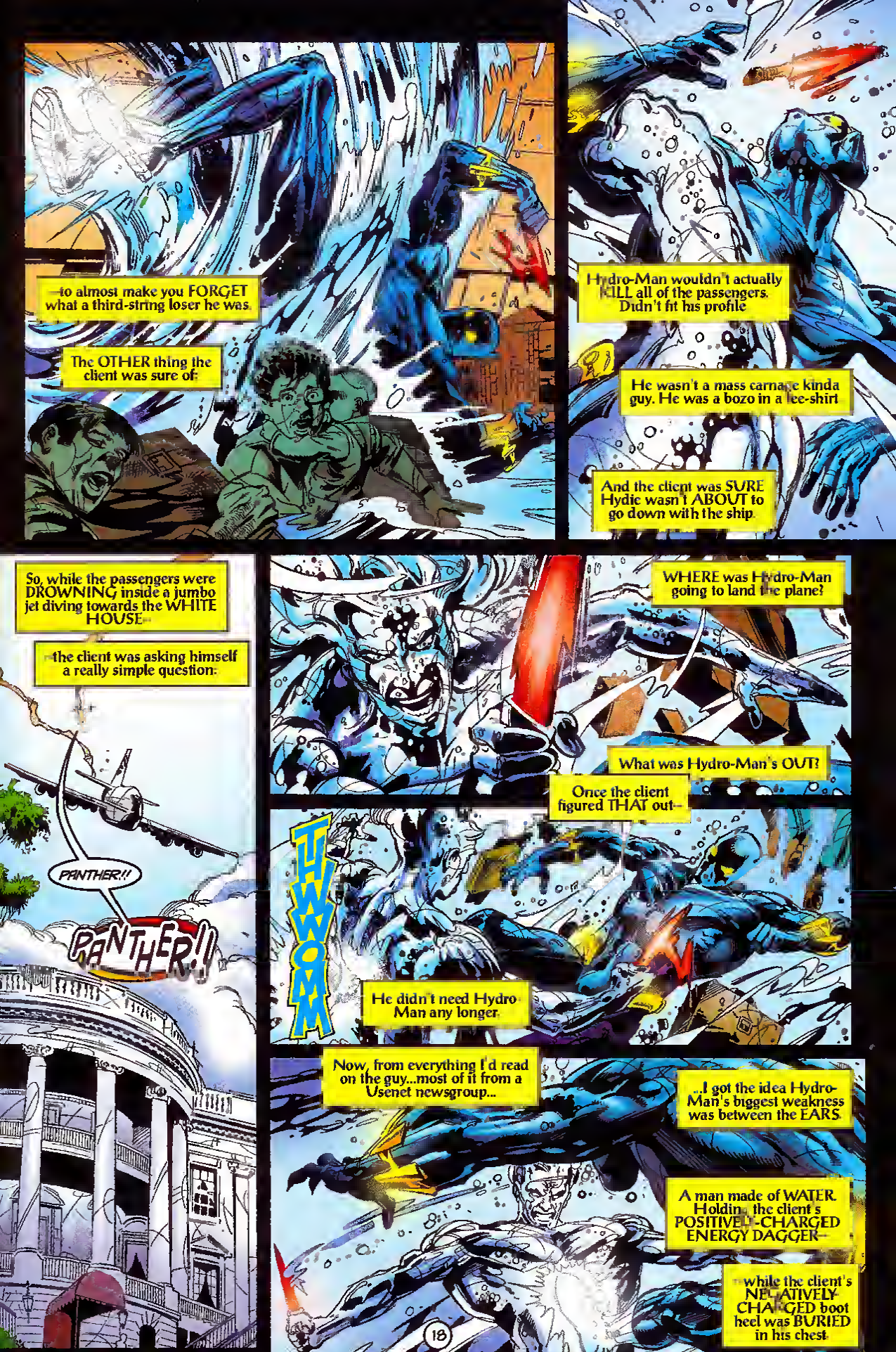

"MAINTAIN RADIO SILENCE?" IS HE KIDDING?!?
REAGAN NATIONAL-- YOU TRACKING THIS--?!
ROGER THAT, AVENGERS 3, EMERGENCY CREWS ARE EVACKING THE WHITE HOUSE AREA--
HOPE YOU BOYS KNOW WHAT YOU'RE DOIN' UP THERE--
ROGER THAT, REAGAN NATIONAL--


"--SO DO I."
There were two things the client was sure of:
One was the PLANE would CRASH. Couldn't be stopped. After all, the plane had NO FUEL.


He knew that the moment he entered and found the cargo bay FLOODED.
Hydro-Man HAD to be storing all of that water SOMEWHERE, and there was only one logical place on a jumbo jet to keep it--


--the FUEL TANKS.
Both wings and the center tank were full of WATER.
>GASP!!<
<HELP ME--!! HELP ME--!!>
Which gave Hydro-Man the home court advantage.


Hydro-Man had left just enough fuel to get the plane airborne, partitioning the fuel from the water by sheer strength of WILL.
So he had MORE than enough water on board


—to almost make you FORGET what a third-string loser he was.
The OTHER thing the client was sure of:
Hydro-Man wouldn't actually KILL all of the passengers. Didn't fit his profile
He wasn't a mass carnage kinda guy. He was a bozo in a tee-shirt
And the client was SURE Hydie wasn't ABOUT to go down with the ship.
So, while the passengers were DROWNING inside a jumbo jet diving towards the WHITE HOUSE—
—the client was asking himself a really simple question:
PANTHER!!
PANTHER!!
WHERE was Hydro-Man going to land the plane?
What was Hydro-Man's OUT?
Once the client figured THAT out—
THWOOM
He didn't need Hydro Man any longer.
Now, from everything I'd read on the guy...most of it from a Usenet newsgroup...
...I got the idea Hydro-Man's biggest weakness was between the EARS.
A man made of WATER. Holding the client's POSITIVELY-CHARGED ENERGY DAGGER—
—while the client's NEGATIVELY-CHARGED boot heel was BURIED in his chest.


A little something they teach you in GRADE SCHOOL called ELECTROLYSIS.
Hydro-Man lost control of the water around him as his core essence broke down into hydrogen and oxygen.
Which made him even MORE deckable.
POW
The GOOD news was, now that the water was no longer under Hydie's control, it was slowly seeping out of the cracks.
LAVATORY
The BAD news was, it wasn't seeping FAST ENOUGH.
ZZWWM! ZZWWM! ZZWWM
The client figured Hydro-Man DELIBERATELY depressurized the cabin to take that advantage away from him.
And also to provide Hydie with a QUICK EXIT when the time came--


GHAAKK--!!
CAN'T--CAN'T SEE--!!
JUSTICE... THIS IS THE BLACK PANTHER.
NO... REALLY--?!?
YES.
PLEASE ALIGN THE QUINJET ON THE PLANE'S FLANK AND LOCK THE TRACTOR BEAM ON.
YOU-- YOU MEAN FOLLOW THE PLANE INTO THE WHITE HOUSE?!?
THE PLANE WILL NOT HIT THE WHITE HOUSE.
HAVE THE RESCUE TEAM MEET THE PLANE AT THESE COORDINATES.
PANTHER... I'M NOT QUITE FOLLOWING YOU--
I AM USING MY KIMOYO CARD TO INTERFACE WITH THE PLANE'S NAVIGATIONAL SYSTEM--
--ALTERING ITS TRAJECTORY SLIGHTLY AND STALLING THE ENGINES.
?!? STALLING--?! THE JET WILL LOSE ITS LIFT--!
YES.
BUT, BETTER A CONTROLLED STALL THAN AN UNPREDICTABLE ONE WHEN THE FUEL IS FINALLY EXHAUSTED.
USE THE TRACTOR BEAM TO PUSH THE JET WHILE I OPERATE THE RUDDER AND WING FLAPS--
KEEE-RAKKK!


NO GOOD--AIR SPEED'S DROPPING TOO FAST--TRACTOR'S NOT ENOUGH THRUST FOR THE JOB--!!
THEN I WILL HAVE TO ATTEMPT TO RESTART THE ENGINES--
NO--IF IT DOESN'T WORK, EVERYBODY'S DEAD! GOTTA TAKE A CHANCE--
--ON JUST HOW POWERFUL I ACTUALLY AM.
NOW, I KNOW I CAN'T LIFT THAT THING, BUT MAYBE, JUST MAYBE--
--I CAN GIVE IT A LITTLE SHOVE!!
Three minutes, fifty-seven seconds.
SSPLAAASSHH


Okay, so it wasn't the most graceful rescue in the world, but the client got everyone--including Gapon--out ALIVE.
That HAD to help the client's stateside rep a little. I'll work up the new numbers when I get back...
NOT SO FAST, AVENGER--!!
IT... IT AIN'T OVER...
I CAN...I'LL STILL... KILL YOU...
Like I said: Hydro-Man's main weakness was that he was STUPID.
WHO HIRED YOU, HYDRO-MAN?
SPEAK HIS NAME, AND I WILL HELP SAVE YOU.
SAVE
WHO'S GONNA SAVE YOU?!?
AND, LIKE I SAID--I DON'T EVEN KNOW THE GUY... GIUSSEPPE... GENERO...
N'JADAKA.
WHATEVER.
C'MON, CAT-MAN--LET'S END THIS--!!
A man, formerly made of WATER, now made of HYDROGEN and OXYGEN--


--standing under a LIVE WIRE. In the space of an EYEBLINK--
--faster than he could even SCREAM--
--it was OVER.
GOTTA HAND IT TO YOU, PANTHER-- THAT WAS SOME MOVE.
NON-SENSE. ALL WOULD HAVE BEEN LOST IF NOT FOR YOU. EXCELLENT THINKING, MY YOUNG FRIEND.
SO... FIRST ULTRON, THEN HYDRO-MAN--
--SHOULD THE AVENGERS BE PUTTING YOUR NAME BACK ON YOUR LOCKER--?
THERE ARE COMPLEX MATTERS OF STATE LEFT TO BE SETTLED, JUSTICE--
YES, THERE CERTAINLY ARE--
--AND LOOK WHO'S BEEN ORDERED TO DO THE SETTLING.
NICOLE--!
HI, YOUR HIGHNESS.
IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME.
NEXT: HE'S INCREDIBLE. HE'S GREEN. AND HE'S AFTER ROSS. GUESS WHO'S COMING TO BROOKLYN...


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ONE MONTH AGO:
DO YOU SINCERELY WANT TO GET RICH?
YOU GOTTA BAND?
WHAT?
BAND? I WISH
I DON'T EVEN HAVE A JOB YET
YOU DON'T LOOK LIKE YOU'RE HERE TO MEET THE AGR MAN KNOWAM SAYING?
COMPUTER SOFTWARE SALES POSITION DUDE
YOU WANT IT
YOU NEED IT
YOU CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT IT
COMING
THEY'RE DOING MUSIC STUFF TOO HUH? GUESS BRAND HEX MUST BE A BIGGER ORGANIZATION THAN IT LOOKS
I NEVER EVEN HEARD OF THEM
WHAT I HEARD IS THEY GOT BURGERS AND INTERNET CAFES AND YOU NAME IT THIS IS THE OUTFIT BEHIND THE SCENES
GENTLEMEN
MR. GREEPY WILL SEE YOU NOW
[Imbie]


BOTH VERY PUNCTUAL. WE LIKE THAT IN OUR EMPLOYEES
YOU'LL HAVE TO EXCUSE US AS WE RESHAPE THIS BUILDING A NEW WORLD FOR EVERYONE TAKES TIME AND MONEY
THIS IS THE DEMO ME AND THE BAND PUT TOGETHER
THIS IS OUR MORE COMMERCIAL MATERIAL WE'RE KINDA FIVE PERCENT INFLUENCE BUT I FIGURE YOU'D WANNA HEAR SOMETHING
I MEAN THE OPPORTUNITY TO BE INVOLVED IN SOMETHING BIG LIKE THIS
OF COURSE YOU'LL BE INVOLVED
BRAND HEX FINDS EMPLOYMENT FOR EVERYONE AND EVERYTHING
KEEP IT
WE TAKE WHAT WE NEED DIRECTLY FROM YOUR HEADS
QUESTIONS
AH D2K!? IT'S ON ALL YOUR ADS
IS THAT SOME KIND OF PRODUCT LAUNCH? IT ALL SOUNDS PRETTY EXCITING
AS FOR "D2K!"...
WHAT?



marvel boy

DIGITAL KONCENTRATION

KAMP X ONE

GRANT MORRISON SCRIPT
J.G. JONES ART
AVALON STUDIOS & MATT MILLA COLORS
RICHARD STARKINGS & COMICRAFT'S WES ABBOTT LETTERS
JOE QUESADA EDITOR NANCI DAKESIAN MANAGING EDITOR
BOB HARRAS EDITOR IN CHIEF PRIMAL SCREAM SOUNDTRACK

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TODAY
THE MARVEL 700 FEET BELOW TIMES SQUARE SHIPWRECKED DIMENSION SCHOONER OF THE 18TH KREE DIPLOMATIC GESTALT
KRRYI
EVERYTHING'S NOW WITH YOU!
SHUT UP
I'M DOWN IN THE CONCEPT DUNGEONS
SO WHAT?
IDEAS
IDEALUS, THE
MAN THERE.
NEXT TO
EMPTY
WHAT'S HEXUS ?
MERGEN


SAID
HEXUS. THE
SAVING CORPORATION
ON THE SUNPEN GALAXY
ESCAPED USING ONE
OF THE HUMANS WHO
ATTEMPTED TO SCAVENGE
THE SHIP AFTER ITS
ARRIVAL
ARE YOUR
NEED AN CORTEX FI
NSTORM TRAI
IS AVAILAB
FORMATIVE
INVISIBLE,
INTANGIBLE, A
ING IDEA, NOW VAR
GROWS BY HIRI
EMPLOYEES
BY DEVELOPIN
ITS RIVALS
PLEASE HAVE
OF SYNTHETIC
ENTITIES WITH NA
AN OR FOX BUT THE
TRULY INTEL
LIKE
HEXUS


AN LIVING CORPORATION IS A CIOUS PARASITE TING QUICKLY TO EDS OF ITS RGET WORLD
IT IMITATES AT PEOPLE WANT YPNOTIZES THEM WITH ISTICATED ADVERTISING CHNIQUES. THEN ES EMPLOYEES OF THEM
THEY LEAVE US WITHOUT A CLUE WHAT HEXUS REALLY IS
BRAND HEX' AS ANOTHER SUCCESS CONGLOMERATE
BUT HEXUS WILL DEVOUR ITS COMPETITORS AND RISE QUICKLY TO THE TOP OF THE CORPORATE CHAIN
SO?
I MEAN, IF IT EATS EVERY LAST ONE OF THESE IGNORANT HUMAN VERMIN SO WHAT?
IT'LL SAVE ME SOME TIME
EARTH PEOPLE SHOT US DOWN. THEY LET HEXUS LOOSE
NOT ALL OF THEM. NOT DOWN AND THIS OUTFIT SIMPLE BROUGHT HEXUS A VULNERABLE PLAN
I'LL EXPLOIT THE ENTIRE GLOBAL ECOSYSTEM TO ALL MINER RESOURCES
THE ONLY DEFENSE THIS WORLD HAS IS YOU
STOP TRYING TO LOAD ALL YOUR GUILT ONTO ME!
HUMANS KILLED EVERYONE I CARED ABOUT
KREE-VANN DIRECTIVE BIG RED HOLDS YOU ACCOUNTABLE THIS PLANET'S SAFE


OKAY
LOOKS LIKE IT STARTED OUT AS A SMALL BUSINESS FROM THESE PREMISES AND THEN GREW, ATTRACTING RECRUITS VIA WORD OF MOUTH AT FIRST, THEN ADVERTISING...
THE SHORT STORY HEXUS WAS HERE BUT IT SHED THIS BUILDING LIKE A SKIN WEEKS AGO
HOW DO I KILL IT, PLEX?
NOBODY EVER FIND A WAY NOH-VAR IT ENSLAVED EARTH AD TO STERILIZE THE ENTIRE TIMELINE
NUH HEXUS UHUH!
BRAND HEX STOCKS ROSE DRAMATICALLY
IN JUST WEEKS THIS SMALL BUT AGGRESSIVELY MARKETED COMPANY HAS RISEN FROM NOWHERE TO DOMINATE THE FINANCIAL LANDSCAPE AND BAFFLE MARKET ANALYSTS
BRAND HEX HAS ALREADY TARGETED MANY OF THE BEST AND BRIGHTEST YOUNG EXECUTIVES FROM ITS CORPORATE RIVALS
HAS EVEN AOL AND DISNEY QUAKING IN THEIR BOOTS AS KIDS TURN TO BRAND HEX FASHIONS BRAND HEX COLAS AND
ARE WE SEEING SOME NEW KIND OF SUPERCORPORATION FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY ?
wake up, brand hex is real
SPAK
NO HEXUS UHPE


AND IT'S FOUND A BIGGER PLACE
YOU WANT IT YOU NEED
U CAN'T LIVE
THE BRAND HEX SIGNATURE STORE OPENS TODAY IN TIMES SQUARE
THIS STORE WILL SELL EVERYTHING! THAT'S RIGHT! EVERYTHING YOU COULD EVER WANT UNDER ONE ROOF
RAPIDLY BECOMING THE MOST FAMOUS CONSUMER LABEL IN THE WORLD — HEX CELEBRATED THE BEGINNING OF THE MYSTERIOUS 'D2K!' EVENT WITH A BIOLUMINESCENT DISPLAY VISIBLE FROM SPACE
TOO LATE
I GOT HERE FIRST


M WAITS
NYPD
POLICE
SUBW
BE QUIET AND LISTEN TO ME FOR JUST ONCE
I THOUGHT OF SOMETHING
WHAT DO THEY KNOW?


VROOOOOOM
NYPD
SKREEEE
33
NYPD


PANG
PANG PANG
OH-UARP
NNNGUH!
PANG
POK
WARN THE MANAGEMENT!
SKAFF! KARRF!
SOMEONE CALL AHEAD!
SECURITY ALERT
SIRI HE'S ON HIS WAY UP!
ELEVATOR 24
DING
I KNOW HE IS
WELCOME TO THE BOARDROOM, LITTLE KREE SOLDIER. ALLOW ME TO INTRODUCE MYSELF
ELEVATOR 24


MR GREEPY
THE CEO OF BRAND HEX
DIRECTOR OF OUR GLOBAL OPERATIONS
THE VOICE OF HEXUS
PRIME SERVANT OF THE LIVING CORPORATION
GOOD. I WAS WONDERING WHAT TO SHOOT
IT'S TOO LATE TO SHOOT
HEXUS GROWS. HEXUS REPLICATES SOON HEXUS WILL OWN EVERYTHING
WE WILL LICENSE THE AIR YOU BREATHE AND THE THOUGHTS WE ALLOW YOU TO THINK
EEUHHHRR


HHHUSSSSS
TAC TAC TAC
QUANTUM ENCRYPTION?
THAT'S ABOUT ALL OF 7/8THS OF A SECOND TO HACK. YOU READY, FLEX?
WE CAN PROMOTE AND WASTE AS MANY EMPLOYEES AS IT TAKES TO DISMISS YOUR THREAT
GET OUT OF THERE NOW VARP
I'M THE NEW CEO OF BRAND HEX
IT'S DONE
THE NEW VOICE AND WRATH OF HEXUSSSSS
SKRAKK


HEXUS CANNOT DIE
EVERYTHING WILL CARRY THE BRAND HEX OGO
EVERYTHING DOWN TO THE PROTEINS IN YOUR DNA. EVERY GENETIC CODE STAMPED AND SEALED
GLADLY OFFER OUR BODY HEAT TO THE WRATH OF HEXUS
LIVE THROUGH THIS!
WAKOOM
UNNHE


BRAND
IT'S ALREADY
NASA SPAC
AGENCY
THE INSTANT
SPORE
SPACE, THIS
ANNGUH
I HEARD YOU THE FIRST TIME
VREEEEE THUP THUP THUP
I'M ACTUALLY OUT HERE DOING THIS STUFF YOU KNOW?
BACK ME UP FOR ONCE


I KNOW YOU CAN STILL HEAR ME, HEXUS AND I KNOW I CAN'T KILL YOU JUST BY SHOOTING AT YOU!
SO HOW DO YOU DEFEAT THE ENEMY YOU CAN'T POSSIBLY DEFEAT...?
ARM YOUR ENEMY'S ENEMY.
EARTH'S NATIVE CORPORATIONS WEREN'T STRONG OR SMART ENOUGH TO RESIST YOU ON THEIR OWN
NOT UNTIL I GAVE THEM AN ADVANTAGE.
I'VE JUST BEEN KEEPING YOU OCCUPIED WHILE THE PLEX HACKED YOUR ENTIRE CORPORATE DATABASE.
MY SECRET SODA RECIPE, EVERY JEALOUSLY HOARDED RECRUITMENT STRATEGY, EVERY CAREFULLY PLOTTED STEP TOWARDS CREATING "DIGITAL KONCENTRATION KAMP 1".
ALL THAT INFORMATION IS ON ITS WAY TO YOUR RIVALS
NO
TOP SECRET
DELL
TOP SECR


I CAN STILL SEE YOU. I CAN STILL DISMISS YOU FROM HERE!
THE HUNGER OF THE LIVING CORPORATION CANNOT BE OPPOSED.
YES IT CAN.
COSMIC BULLET.
VRRP
WAKOOM!


DAZED AND SHOCKED, FORMER DIRECTORS AND OTHER EMPLOYEES OF THE BRAND HEX CORPORATION SPOKE OF A RELENTLESS SERIES OF VIOLENT DISMISSALS FROM THE SO-CALLED SUPERCORPORATION
IT CONTROLLED OUR MINDS WE WERE IT WE WERE OUR JOBS MY OWN LIFE WAS GONE SAID ONE SURVIVOR OF THE MYSTERY EXPLOSION IN THE HEART OF MIDTOWN
BRAND HEX SHARES FELL DRAMATICALLY AGAIN AS THE BELEAGUERED GIANT SUFFERED ANOTHER SERIES OF DRAMATIC REVERSALS IN THE WORLD MARKETS
TEENAGERS RUSHING TO HAVE HEX TATTOOS REMOVED
BRAND HEX GREW TOO FAST, TOO QUICKLY AND THEY COLLAPSED AND DIED UNDER THEIR OWN WEIGHT
ACCORDING TO STYLE BIBLE 'ENCEPHALO-GUN' THE BRAND HEX PHENOMENON IS YESTERDAY'S FAD OFFICIAL!
ANNING IR BROADCA MKR HEX FINISHED
HUGE ASTS TEA DING AN
OUR IDEA BRILLIANT PROUD OUR STRATEG INCORPORAT THE TACTICAL LIBRARY
ALL RIGHT


TOMORROW
BRAND HEX FINALLY WENT INTO SPECTACULAR LIQUIDATION THIS MORNING MARKING THE END OF A BRIEF ERA OF
PEARL
HALL
NUH-UHRG
FLEX I MISSED UP SUIT ENHANCEMENTS BURNED OUT
HEXUS HURT ME
JUSS EAT
JUSS REST AND I'LL BE OKAY
SHRUP
BUT SOM
WITH OM
PTION
HIS
DIDN'T HAVE T
HNOLOGY


ON YOUR FEET, DISCO BUNNY.
FLEX? I CAN'T HEAR ANY MORE
YOU WANT US TO BUST YOU FOR IMPERSONATING A SUPER HERO? COME ON, OUTTA HERE BEFORE I SET THE THING ON YA!
HA HAHA HA!
JUSS EAT PLUCKED YOU FROM OBLIVION, MORONS
AH GEEZ LOOK! HE'S EATING CARDBOARD AND DOG BONES AND ALL THIS
BARNEY SHUT UP. TURN AROUND
THIS SHIFT'S GETTING WEIRDER
PRIORITY MIDAS, OFFICERS THE 'GOLDEN RULE'. I KNOW YOU'RE FAMILIAR WITH THE MILITARY CODE I'M REFERRING TO
YOU HAVE FIFTEEN SECONDS TO COMPLY
WALK AWAY BERNIE. FORGET YOU WERE EVER HERE.
DADDY'S GIRL WAS ONLY GIVEN ONE BULLET TO PLAY WITH TODAY


AND THIS IS FOR THE HEART OF THE BOY WHO FELL TO EARTH
NEXT ISSUE
EXTERMINATRIX!


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YOU ARE THE PUNISHER, YES?
OF COURSE YOU ARE. YOU LOOK JUST LIKE YOUR PICTURE.
I AM CALLED THE RUSSIAN.
WHUNNCH
RIGHT!
LET'S GET STARTED, SHALL WE?
SCRUNNCHH


UM. MA?
MRS. GNUCCI?
MRS. --


WHAT IS IT, CRETIN?
THE... THE MAYOR RETURNING YOUR CALL, MA'AM...
HOLD IT FOR ME.
CLOSER, IDIOT!
MR. MAYOR...

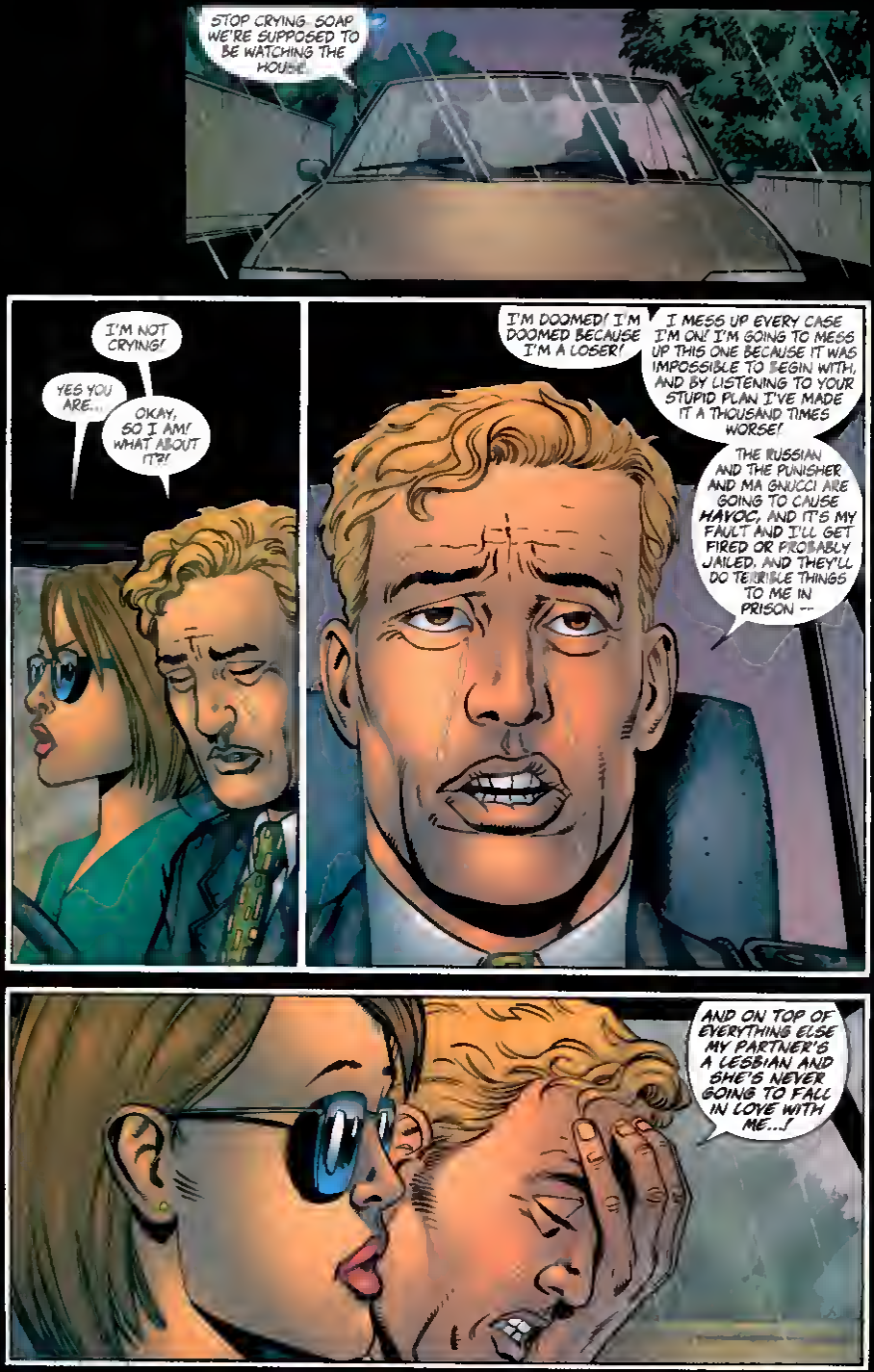

DO I DETECT A LITTLE FEAR IN YOUR VOICE THERE? IS THAT THE COMMISSIONER I HEAR, WETTING HIS PANTS IN THE BACKGROUND?
YES, AS A MATTER OF FACT I DO WANT SOMETHING
I TOLD YOU TO SIC THE COPS ON THE PUNISHER. THEY HAVEN'T DONE SQUAT, SO I'VE HAD TO BRING IN A LITTLE OUTSIDE HELP.
NOW I WOULD IMAGINE THAT PRETTY SOON A CERTAIN BUILDING OFF MOTT STREET IS GOING TO BECOME A CHARNEL HOUSE, AND WHEN THE SCREAMING STARTS YOU AND YOUR BUDDY THERE HAD BETTER GO DEAF. NO INTERFERENCE, UNDERSTAND?
AND NOT A WHISPER OF MY NAME IN THE ENSUING INVESTIGATION. EITHER
ANY PROBLEMS, JUST REMEMBER THE PICTURES OF YOU TWO I HAVE IN MY SAFE. THE FACT-FINDING TOUR OF VEGAS, YES...
OH, STOP WHIMPERING, MR. MAYOR. GOODBYE.

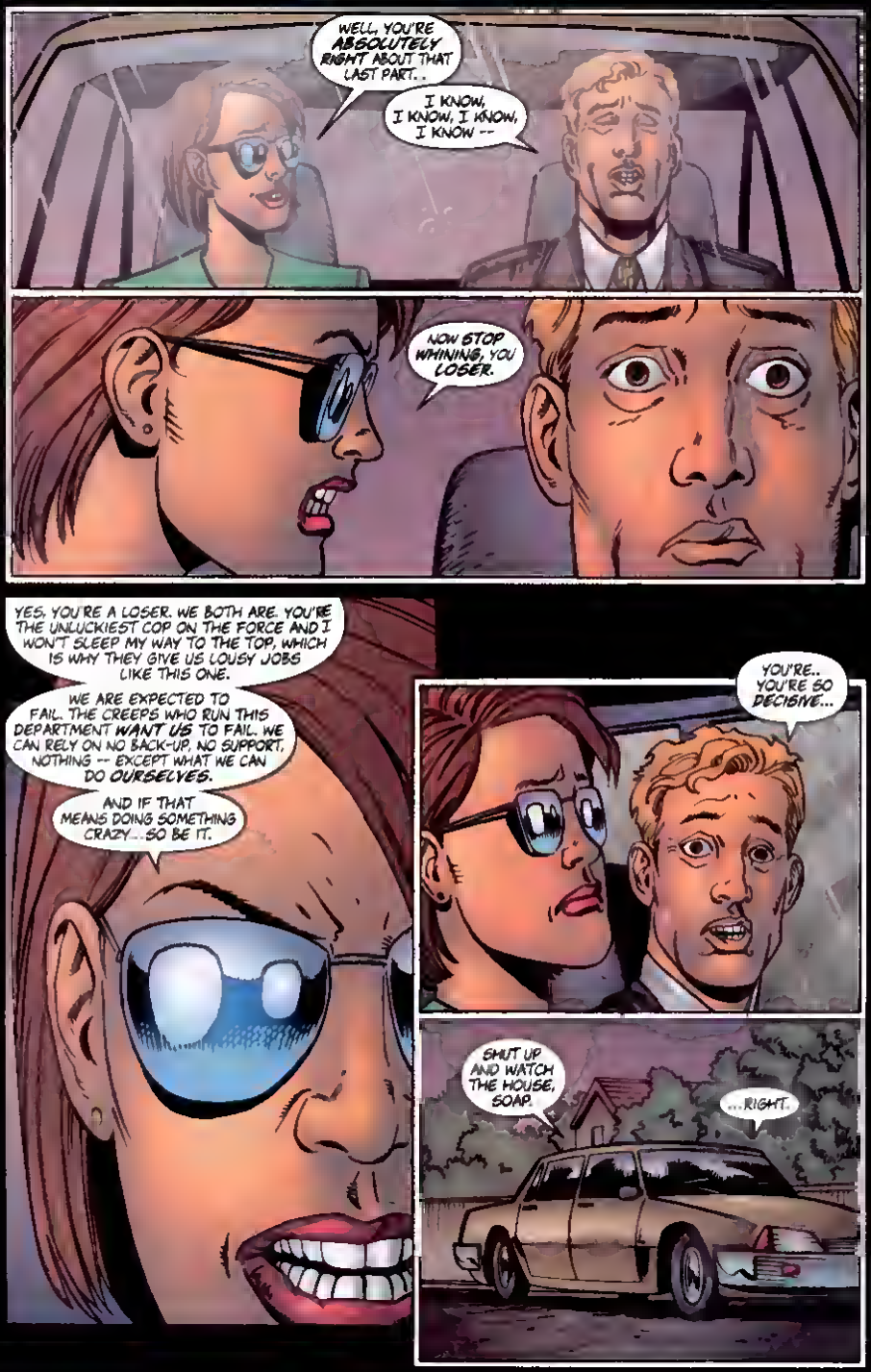

THAT MEANS I'M FINISHED, CRETIN. YOU'RE FREE TO GO.
R... RIGHT...
...LICK MY SCABS...
BOOOAAAAKK!


OH! SUCH GRACE, BIG BOY!
WH
AM
AND WHAT A LANDING! SIX POINT SIX!
HA HA HA HA HA HA!

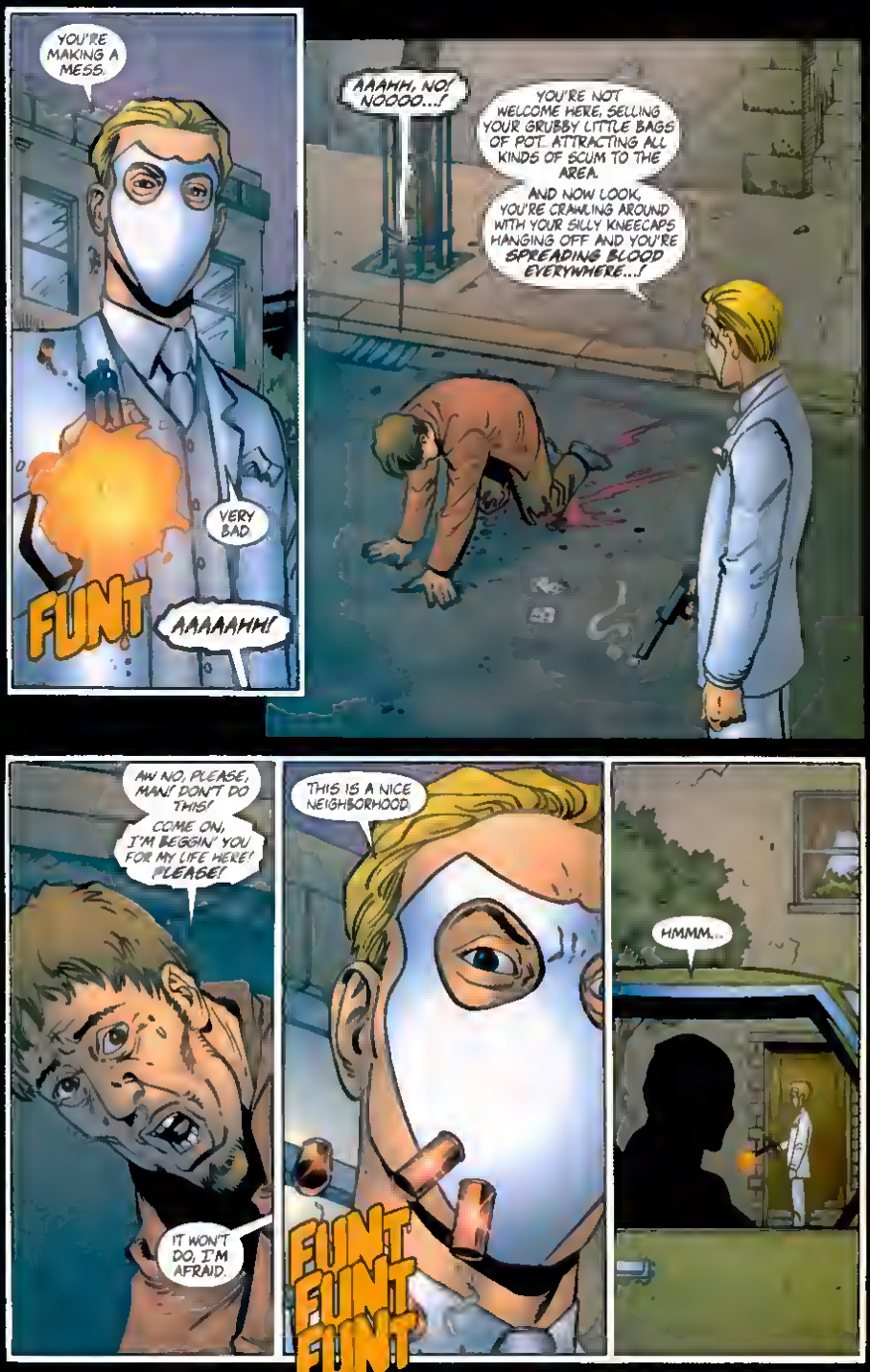

WHAT WAS THAT...?
SOME FIGHT IN YOU YET, EH, BIG BOY? GOOD!
UP YOU COME, MY FRIEND! EASY NOW! DON'T TRY AND RUSH THINGS!
OKAY, LET'S HAVE IT! YOUR BEST SHOT! GIVE IT TO ME!
KRRAK!!
THAT'S THE SPIRIT!


OKAY, MY TURN! DON'T GO ANYWHERE!
BE RIGHT WITH YOU, BIG BOY!
RRRIIPP
SCRUNNCH
DONNGGG
SPLISSHH
OKAY, PUCKER UP!
...NO.
WHANNG
HOME RUN!


STOP CRYING, SOAP! WE'RE SUPPOSED TO BE WATCHING THE HOUSE!
I'M NOT CRYING!
YES YOU ARE...
OKAY, SO I AM! WHAT ABOUT IT?!
I'M DOOMED! I'M DOOMED BECAUSE I'M A LOSER!
I MESS UP EVERY CASE I'M ON! I'M GOING TO MESS UP THIS ONE BECAUSE IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO BEGIN WITH, AND BY LISTENING TO YOUR STUPID PLAN I'VE MADE IT A THOUSAND TIMES WORSE!
THE RUSSIAN AND THE PUNISHER AND MA GNUCCI ARE GOING TO CAUSE HAVOC, AND IT'S MY FAULT AND I'LL GET FIRED OR PROBABLY JAILED. AND THEY'LL DO TERRIBLE THINGS TO ME IN PRISON --
AND ON TOP OF EVERYTHING ELSE MY PARTNER'S A LESBIAN AND SHE'S NEVER GOING TO FALL IN LOVE WITH ME...!

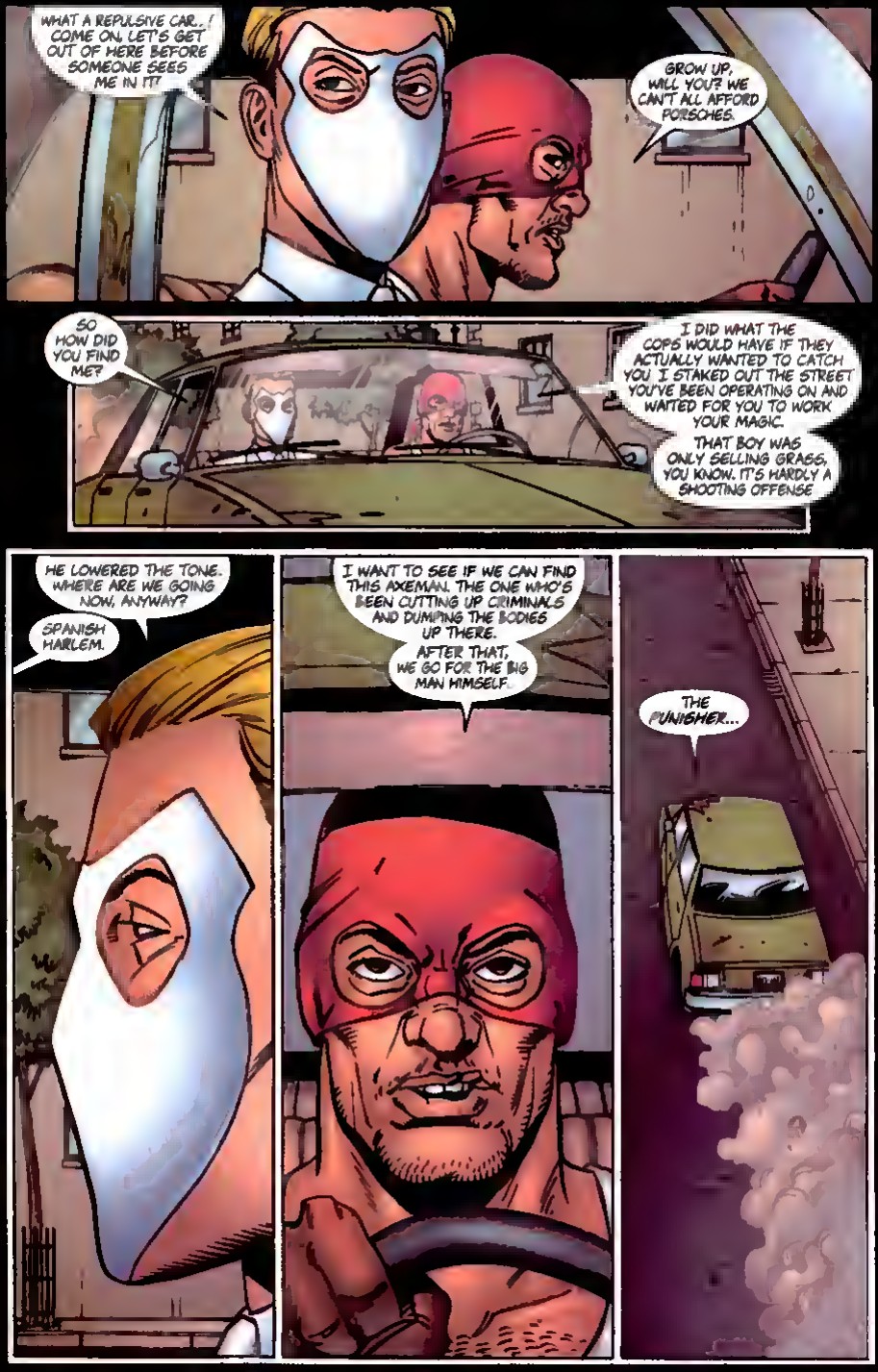

WELL, YOU'RE ABSOLUTELY RIGHT ABOUT THAT LAST PART..
I KNOW, I KNOW, I KNOW, I KNOW --
NOW STOP WHINING, YOU LOSER.
YES. YOU'RE A LOSER. WE BOTH ARE. YOU'RE THE UNLUCKIEST COP ON THE FORCE AND I WON'T SLEEP MY WAY TO THE TOP, WHICH IS WHY THEY GIVE US LOUSY JOBS LIKE THIS ONE.
WE ARE EXPECTED TO FAIL. THE CREEPS WHO RUN THIS DEPARTMENT WANT US TO FAIL. WE CAN RELY ON NO BACK-UP, NO SUPPORT, NOTHING -- EXCEPT WHAT WE CAN DO OURSELVES.
AND IF THAT MEANS DOING SOMETHING CRAZY...SO BE IT.
YOU'RE.. YOU'RE SO DECISIVE...
SHUT UP AND WATCH THE HOUSE, SOAP.
...RIGHT.


INCOMING!
UM...?
OH! DON'T COUNT HIM OUT JUST YET!
KLANK
I LIKE YOU, BIG BOY! I THINK WE STILL GOT A LOT OF FUN AHEAD OF US!
?
KNIFE IN THE GUTS, YES?
THAT'S NOT VERY NICE!


YOU'RE MAKING A MESS.
VERY BAD.
FUNT
AAAAAHH!
AAAHH, NO! NOOOO...!
YOU'RE NOT WELCOME HERE, SELLING YOUR GRUBBY LITTLE BAGS OF POT. ATTRACTING ALL KINDS OF SCUM TO THE AREA.
AND NOW LOOK, YOU'RE CRAWLING AROUND WITH YOUR SILLY KNEECAPS HANGING OFF AND YOU'RE SPREADING BLOOD EVERYWHERE...!
AW NO, PLEASE, MAN! DON'T DO THIS!
COME ON, I'M BEGGIN' YOU FOR MY LIFE HERE! PLEASE!
IT WON'T DO, I'M AFRAID.
THIS IS A NICE NEIGHBORHOOD.
FUNT FUNT FUNT
HMMM...

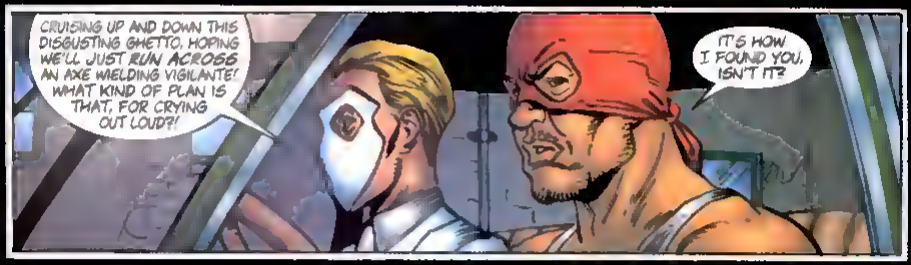

FIGHT FAIR, BIG BOY! NO MORE KNIVES, YES?
BAM BAM BAM BAM BAM
KRENKK
OH --!
MLK
YOU CHILL THERE, BIG BOY! I GO FIND SOMETHING ELSE TO HIT YOU WITH!
CHILL, GET IT? FUNNY JOKE!
...OKAY, MAYBE NOT.
WHY CAN'T I JUST PASS OUT?


GET IN THE CAR, ELITE.
I KNOW YOU...
YOU'RE THAT FREAK ON THE NEWS. MR. PAYBACK. ISN'T THAT WHAT YOU CALL YOURSELF?
FREAK? THAT'S RICH, COMING FROM YOU.
COME ON. GET IN THE CAR.
AND WHY WOULD I WANT TO DO THAT, EXACTLY?
YOU KNOW WHY. WE DO THE SAME JOB. WE'LL DO IT A LOT BETTER TEAMING UP.
UNITED WE STAND. DIVIDED WE'RE JUST A PAIR OF IDIOTS WORKING OUR WAY INTO SOME POLICE SNIPER'S CROSSHAIRS.
BUT YOU... YOU HIT CORPORATIONS, BANKS, THE RICH...
I DO WHAT THE COPS CAN'T OR WON'T. DOES THAT RING ANY BELLS?
POINT.


WHAT A REPULSIVE CAR... COME ON, LET'S GET OUT OF HERE BEFORE SOMEONE SEES ME IN IT!
GROW UP, WILL YOU? WE CAN'T ALL AFFORD PORSCHES.
SO HOW DID YOU FIND ME?
I DID WHAT THE COPS WOULD HAVE IF THEY ACTUALLY WANTED TO CATCH YOU. I STAKED OUT THE STREET YOU'VE BEEN OPERATING ON AND WAITED FOR YOU TO WORK YOUR MAGIC.
THAT BOY WAS ONLY SELLING GRASS, YOU KNOW. IT'S HARDLY A SHOOTING OFFENSE
HE LOWERED THE TONE. WHERE ARE WE GOING NOW, ANYWAY?
SPANISH HARLEM.
I WANT TO SEE IF WE CAN FIND THIS AXEMAN. THE ONE WHO'S BEEN CUTTING UP CRIMINALS AND DUMPING THE BODIES UP THERE.
AFTER THAT, WE GO FOR THE BIG MAN HIMSELF.
THE PUNISHER...


WHUMPP
UHHH!
TURN ON THE GAS
FOR NO GOOD REASON
HEADS UP, BIG BOY!
AAAAH! BURNING! NO!
YOU HURT ME, YOU STUPID AMERICAN PIG!
DOESN'T LIKE HEAT
HAVE TO REMEMBER--


THIS IS RIDICULOUS, WE'RE NEVER GOING TO FIND HIM...!


CRUISING UP AND DOWN THIS DISGUSTING GHETTO, HOPING WE'LL JUST RUN ACROSS AN AXE WIELDING VIGILANTE! WHAT KIND OF PLAN IS THAT, FOR CRYING OUT LOUD?!
IT'S HOW I FOUND YOU, ISN'T IT?


MOAN-MOAN-MOAN, THAT ABOUT SUMS YOU UP, DOESN'T IT? TYPICAL SPOILED LITTLE RICH BOY -- YOU RUN INTO A PROBLEM YOU CAN'T SOLVE WITH MONEY AND YOU FALL APART ON THE SPOT.
THIS IS THE REAL WORLD, PAL. THIS IS WHERE WHAT YOU WANT HAS TO BE PAID FOR WITH EFFORT AND HARD WORK...
DON'T LECTURE ME, YOU -- GOOD LORD!
HELP... ME...!


THE -- THE PRIEST! HE'S GONE
WHAT ON EARTH --?
HE TRIED TO KILL ME, MAN! HE WAS TAKIN' MY CONFESSION AN' I TOLD HIM I HELD UP A SEVEN-ELEVEN AN' HE -- HE --
HE STUCK AN AXE IN MY CHEST — OH, NO!
I'LL ABSOLVE YOU, YOU FILTH! I'LL ABSOLVE YOU!
DRIVING AROUND HOPING WE'LL JUST RUN ACROSS HIM. WELL, WHAT KIND OF A PLAN IS THAT...
SHUT UP, YOU OAF.
WH-WH-WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
HUH?
FUNT
FUNT
FUNT


I... KNOW YOU, DON'T I? FROM T.V.?
ELITE AND MR. PAYBACK, YES. YOU DO THE SAME THING I DO...
I'M AFRAID WE KNOW YOU BY REPUTATION ONLY, FATHER...?
HECTOR REDONDO. MY FRIENDS.
YOU CAN CALL ME THE HOLY.
WE'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR YOU, FATHER. WE HAVE AN IDEA WE WANT TO RUN BY YOU
REALLY? I WONDER IF IT'S THE SAME ONE I HAD?
VERY LIKELY. THE THREE OF US -- THE PUNISHER, WHEN WE FIND HIM -- WELL, YOU KNOW WHAT THIS IS, DON'T YOU?
THIS IS THE BEGINNING.


DING-DING!
END OF ROUND ONE!
AH, IT IS GOOD TO BE BACK IN UNITED STATES OF AMERICA. HOW I LOVE IT HERE!
ESPECIALLY I LOVE YOUR AMERICAN SUPER HEROES. WE HAVE NOTHING LIKE THEM WHERE I COME FROM. WHEN WE FINISH HERE, PERHAPS I VISIT THEM FOR AUTOGRAPHS...
WELL, WELL
LOOK WHAT I MUST HAVE DROPPED.
UNCANNY X-MEN! COLLECTIBLE FIRST APPEARANCE!


AMAZING SPIDER-MAN. THWIPP, THWIPP!
FANTASTIC FOUR — PERHAPS I JOIN THEM! WHO IS STRONGER, THE THING OR THE RUSSIAN. YES?
AND HERE COMES DAREDEVIL! MAN WITHOUT FEAR!
YOU KNOW I AM FOUNDING MEMBER OF DAREDEVIL MAN WITHOUT FEAR FAN CLUB OF SMOLENSK?
HEY, WHAT YOU UP TO OVER THERE, BIG GUY?
OOOOHH...!


NO END TO YOUR BAD HABITS, IS THERE?
KRENKK
OKEY-DOKEY, BIG BOY. SECONDS AWAY.
ROUND TWO.
TO BE CONTINUED


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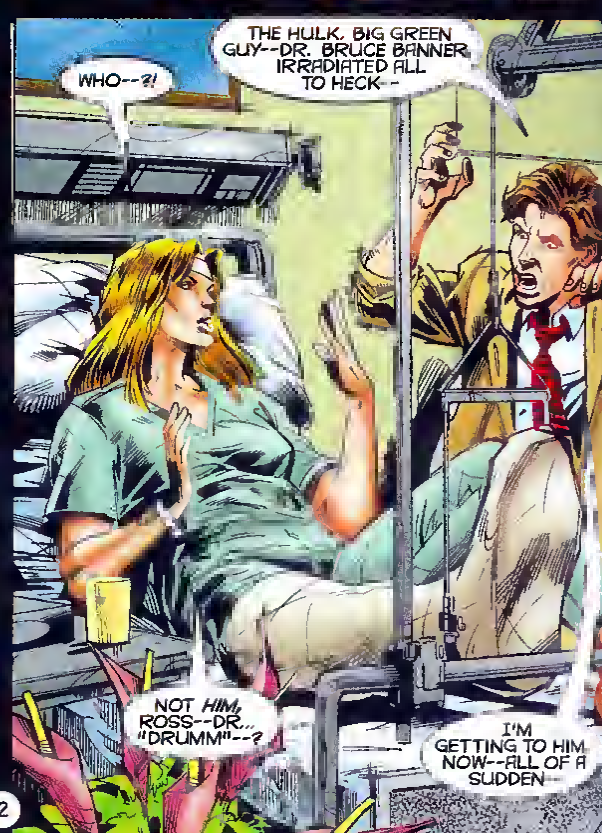


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They called him THE INCREDIBLE HULK, and with GOOD reason.
GRAH!! HULK SMASH!!
--90 DAYS PROBATION AND A SMALL FINE--
KERRASH!!


Don't ask me where he came from Nikki. All I knew was, two seconds before, Dr. Jericho Drumm had dropped me off there in New Lots--
YYYEEEEEERAAAAAHHHH!!
LITTLE MAN RUN-- BUT LITTLE MAN WILL NOT
MAYBE NOT, BUT LITTLE MAN WILL WET HIMSELF...


--landing serendipitously, right on the hulk's HEAD. That's all it TOOK to get the PARTY STARTED
HULK SMASH LITTLE MAN--!!
OT THE HAIR!! NOT THE HAIR!!!

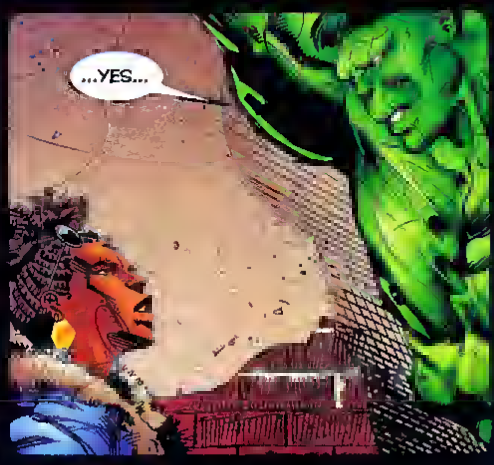

WHO--?!
THE HULK, BIG GREEN GUY--DR. BRUCE BANNER, IRRADIATED ALL TO HECK--
NOT HIM, ROSS--DR. "DRUMM"--?
I'M GETTING TO HIM NOW--ALL OF A SUDDEN


--the CLIENT appeared out of nowhere.
GARGHH!!
BLACK-MAN!!!
NOW, NOW, MY FRIEND-- IS THAT ANY WAY TO TREAT YOUR FELLOW MAN--?!
HOW ABOUT WE ALL SIT DOWN AND TALK THIS OUT--?
I wanted to see him try that Mephisto trick-- POW! Right in the kisser.
But that would've taken preparation and I had the feeling the client was doing IMPROV there.
YOUR HIGHNESS--SHOULD I CALL IN THE AVENGERS--? AN AIR STRIKE--?
WHY?
BLACK-MAN'S CLAWS CAN'T HURT HULK--
NOTHING CAN HURT HULK!!
THWACK
One of these times, he's gonna say, "Heck yeah! Call them puppies!" and I'm gonna run for my life.
SO I'VE BEEN TOLD.
HE REALLY HAVE A LOT IN COMMON, YOU AND
I THINK WE SHOULD SHARE OUR EXPERIENCES... GET SOME COFFEE, PERHAPS--
DECAF, DEFINITELY.
3
BAH.
BLACK-MAN TRYING TO FOOL HULK! BLACK-MAN THINKS HULK IS STUPID!
WELL, HULK WILL SHOW BLACK-MAN WHO IS STUPID--
WHEN HULK SMAS--
YO--YO--!! HOLLUP--!


Her name was Chantè Giovanni Brown, but she called herself QUEEN DIVINE JUSTICE.
She was NAKIA'S REPLACEMENT, newly recruited to the order of the Dora Milaje, but no one had told US yet.
HAVE YOU LOST YO DANGED MIND?!
YOU CAN'T SMASH "BLACK-MAN" WITH THAT!
BAH! HULK DOES WHATEVER HULK WANTS, GIRL!
WHO YOU CALLIN' A GIRL? YO MAMA'S A GIRL!
HULK HAS NO MAMA!
WELL, THAT EXPLAINS A LOT.
LOOK 'ERE, HOSS--
HULK!
WHATEVER--


--YOU CAN'T JUST COME AROUND HERE BREAKIN' FOLKS' STUFF UP. THAT'S SOMEBODY'S HOUSE YOU JUST RAN THROUGH.
DON'T YOU THINK IT'S HARD ENOUGH FOR THE DOWNTRODDEN, DISENFRANCHISED MINORITY CLASS TO FACE THEIR DAILY STRUGGLE--
--WITHOUT SOME BIG OL' GREEN MUV STEPPER RUNNIN' THROUGH THE HOOD KICKIN' UP ALL THAT DRAMA?



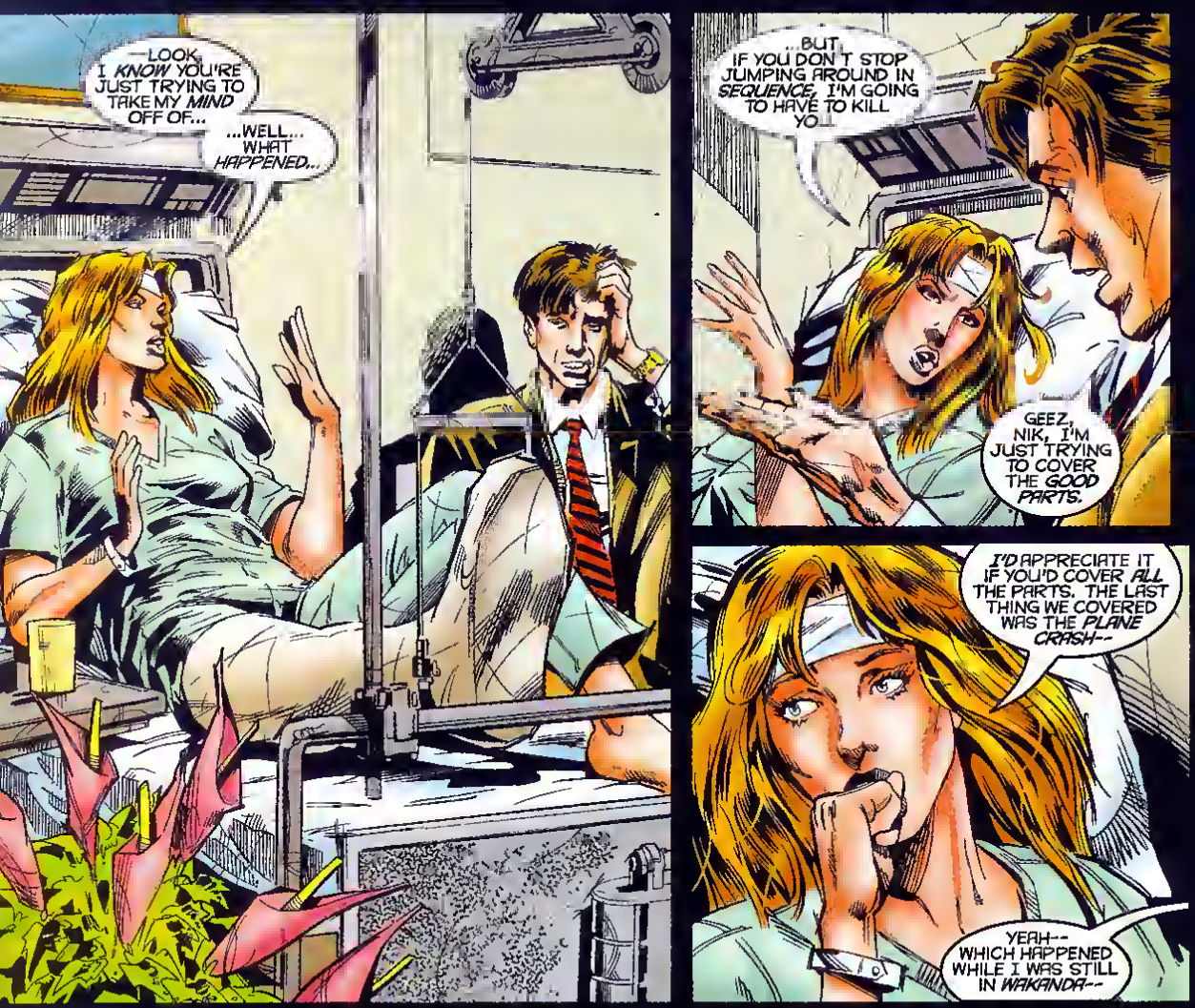

...YES...


...AH, PARDON ME, MISS, BUT--
WHAT DO YOU WANT, EVERETT K. ROSS, SPECIAL ATTACHE OF THE OPPRESSIVE FEDERALIST REGIME?
--DID I MISS A MEETING SOME-WHERE--?
PROBABLY. NOW, HULK--


--LOOK AROUND YOU-- THIS IS THE UGLY BY-PRODUCT OF THE AMERICAN DREAM. HULK--
--FOR EVERY LEXUS THEY SELL UPTOWN, THERE'S 25 HUNGRY MINORITY KIDS JUST TRYING TO SURVIVE AN INSTITUTIONALIZED DEGENERATIVE ECONOMIC SYSTEM.
YOU DIG ME?
...
...YES. HULK DIG... NOT SMASH BLACK-MAN--?
>SIGH<
NO, MY BEAUTIFUL RIGHTEOUS EMERALD BROTHER--QUEEN DIVINE JUSTICE IS NOT ABOUT REPRESSING HONEST EXPRESSION.
ALL I MEANT WAS HULK NOT SMASH BLACK-MAN WITH THAT.
THAT IS MR. GILMORE'S CAR.
SMASH BLACK-MAN WITH THAT ONE.
--?!
NYPD
EMERGENCY 911
POL
POL
YES... YES...HULK UNDER-STANDS!
HULK MEANS NO HARM TO ANYONE WHO DOESN'T HARM HULK--
--SO HULK MUST SMASH ONLY BLACK-MAN!!
DOWN-TRODDEN BY-PRODUCT OF LEXUS!!
5


Luckily, the Vibranium soles of the client's BOOTS were able to ROB the car of its momentum.
Now, if only he could do that for Queen's MOUTH we'd REALLY have something...
YO, MONEY, I TOLD THE OLD DUDE I DON'T GET ALL THAT TRIBAL LINGO AND WHAT-NOT--
<BELOVED YOU MUST NOT SPEAK UNLESS YOU ARE SPOKEN TO.>*
*FROM HAUSA. --ROO
--BUT I GUESS YOU WANT ME TO LIE TO HIM?
LIE TO HULK!
TAKE ADVANTAGE OF HIM?
TAKE ADVANTAGE OF HULK!
DISENFRANCHISE HIM?!
LIE TO HULK!
I THINK WE SHOULD ALL CALM DOWN--
OH-- DIP! YOU HEAR WHAT HE SAID?!
YO, HULK, MY MAN DISSED YOU!
HULK DISSED!
...Y THE SOULS OF MY FATHERS...
KNOW WHAT I THINK YOU OUGHTTA DO HULK--?
HULK SMASH BLACK-MAN!!!
NAH-- GOT AN EVEN BETTER IDEA--
--LET'S JUST BOUNCE.
FORGET THESE STIFFS-- LET'S HIT THE CLUB!
HULK BOUNCE!
Which brings us to the NIGHT CLUB scene...
"ROSS-- ROSS--"
6

TO BE CONTINUED






WITH THE SLEEKNESS OF THE JUNGLE CAT WHOSE NAME HE BEARS, T'CHALLA - KING OF WAKANDA - STALKS BOTH THE CONCRETE CITY AND THE UNDERGROWTH OF THE VELDT. SO IT HAS BEEN FOR COUNTLESS GENERATIONS OF WARRIOR KINGS, SO IT IS TODAY, AND SO IT SHALL BE FOR THE LAW DICTATES THAT ONLY THE SWIFT, THE SMART, AND THE STRONG SURVIVE! NOBLE CHAMPION VIGILANT PROTECTOR STAN LEE PRESENTS
BLACK PANTHER
SMASH
BY:
PRIEST & SAL VELLUTO
WRITER · STORYTELLERS · PENCILER
BOB ALMOND / INKER
BRAO VANCATA / COLORIST
SHARPEFONT AND P.T. / LETTERER
RUBEN DIAZ / EDITOR
BOB HARRAS / EDITOR-IN-CHIEF


...AH...
MY REGENT--
Y'KNOW, W'KABI--I THINK I READ SOMEWHERE THAT BULL ELEPHANTS WERE ON THE ENDANGERED SPECIES LIST.
I'M SURE I RECOGNIZED HIM—
THIS ELEPHANT, IN FACT.
--THE KING HAS LEFT YOU TO REPRESENT HIM IN HIS ABSENCE.
THE HUNT IS THE KING'S SACRED DUTY.
THE PEACE OF THE NATION IS BALANCED BY THE KING'S OBSERVATION OF TRIBAL RITUAL—
—AND WAKANDA IS A LAND OF MANY TRIBES.
...YEAH... I'LL BET..
GIMME A SEC.
PRE-HUNT PHONE CALL. YOU UNDERSTAND.

YOURS AND MINE




TAP TAP TAP TAP
TAP TAP TAP TAP
TAP TAP TAP TAP
TAP TAP TAP TAP
IS THAT ALL?


NO...BEAR WITH ME A SEC, YOUR HIGHNESS
—ROSS'S NOTES TEND TO JUMP AROUND A BIT...
WHY DO YOU ADDRESS ME THIS WAY?
IT'S HOW YOU'RE *SUPPOSED* TO BE ADDRESSED.
BLEEEEP
BLEEEEP
BLEEEEP
IT'S OCP GUIDEBOOK.
BLEEEEP
BLEEEEP
BLEEEEP
IT'S ALL WE HAVE LEFT.
BLEEEEP
BLEEEEP
BLEEEEP
BLEEEEP
BLEEEEP
BLEEEEP
THAT'S MINE.


NIKKI--LOOK--THIS "REGENT" BUSINESS--
--THESE PEOPLE ARE TRYING TO KILL ME.
ROSS--I REALLY CAN'T DEAL WITH THIS RIGHT NOW...
OH--I'M SORRY--IS MY GETTING STOMPED BY A REALLY BIG FRAPPING ELEPHANT FROM HELL KEEPING YOU FROM SOMETHING MORE IMPORTANT--?!
YES.
NIK--!!
CLAK
HEARD BOTH ENDS OF THAT, DIDN'T YOU?
HARD TO HAVE A PRIVATE CONVERSATION ANYWHERE IN RANGE OF THOSE ENHANCED SENSES OF YOURS.
I THOUGHT YOU UNDERSTOOD.
I THOUGHT YOU KNEW ME, NICOLE. I THOUGHT WE WERE FRIENDS.
>SIGH<
OF COURSE WE ARE.
THIS IS JUST...SO STRANGE. OF COURSE I KNEW THIS MIGHT HAPPEN--
--THAT MY CAREER AT THE STATE DEPARTMENT MIGHT EVENTUALLY HAVE ME SITTING ACROSS A TABLE FROM YOU--
--BUT THE ABSTRACT DOESN'T QUITE PREPARE YOU FOR THE REALITY.
WE SHOULDN'T BE STRANGERS, T'CHALLA. YOU'RE RIGHT, I'VE BEHAVED BADLY.
WORSE, NICOLE--YOU DISHONOR ME.
I WHAT--?
YOU DISHONOR ME BY DELIBERATELY MAKING YOUR LOVER MY ATTACHÉ
AS THOUGH YOUR SCENT WOULDN'T BE ON HIM WHEN I FIRST MET HIM AT THE AIRPORT*--AND MANY TIMES AFTER.
YOU MAKE HIM THE FOOL, AND YOU MAKE ME RESPONSIBLE.
WHICH OF WE THREE ARE YOU TRYING TO PUNISH?

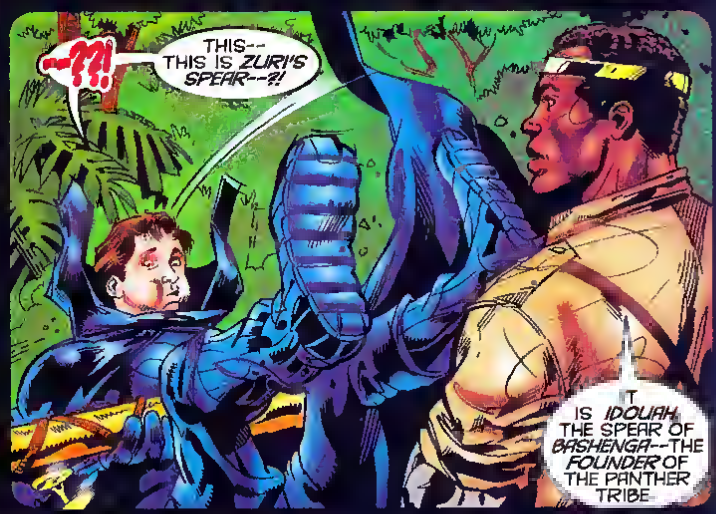
*ISSUE #2. --ROO


BLEEEEP
BLEEEEP
BLEEEEP
BLEEEEP
BLEEEEP
BLEEEEP
MAYBE ALL OF US.
BLEEEEP
BLEEEEP
BLEE
THAT'S YOURS.
HEY— YOUR HIGHNESS—? HOW'S IT GOIN'?
LOOK, I HATE TO DISTURB YOU, SIR, BUT, AH, I WAS WONDERING ABOUT THIS HUNT DEAL—
—Y'THINK MAYBE WE COULD JUST SAY I BATTLED THE ROGUE ELEPHANT—?
YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THE HUNT HONOR'S ME, AGENT ROSS.
YOUR SACRIFICE FOR THE GOOD OF MY NATION WILL NOT GO UNREWARDED
YEAH, BUT... AH...
PUT W'KABI ON, PLEASE.
SEE TO IT HE IS NOT HARMED
UNDERSTOOD, MY KING

HAIL TO THE CHIEF

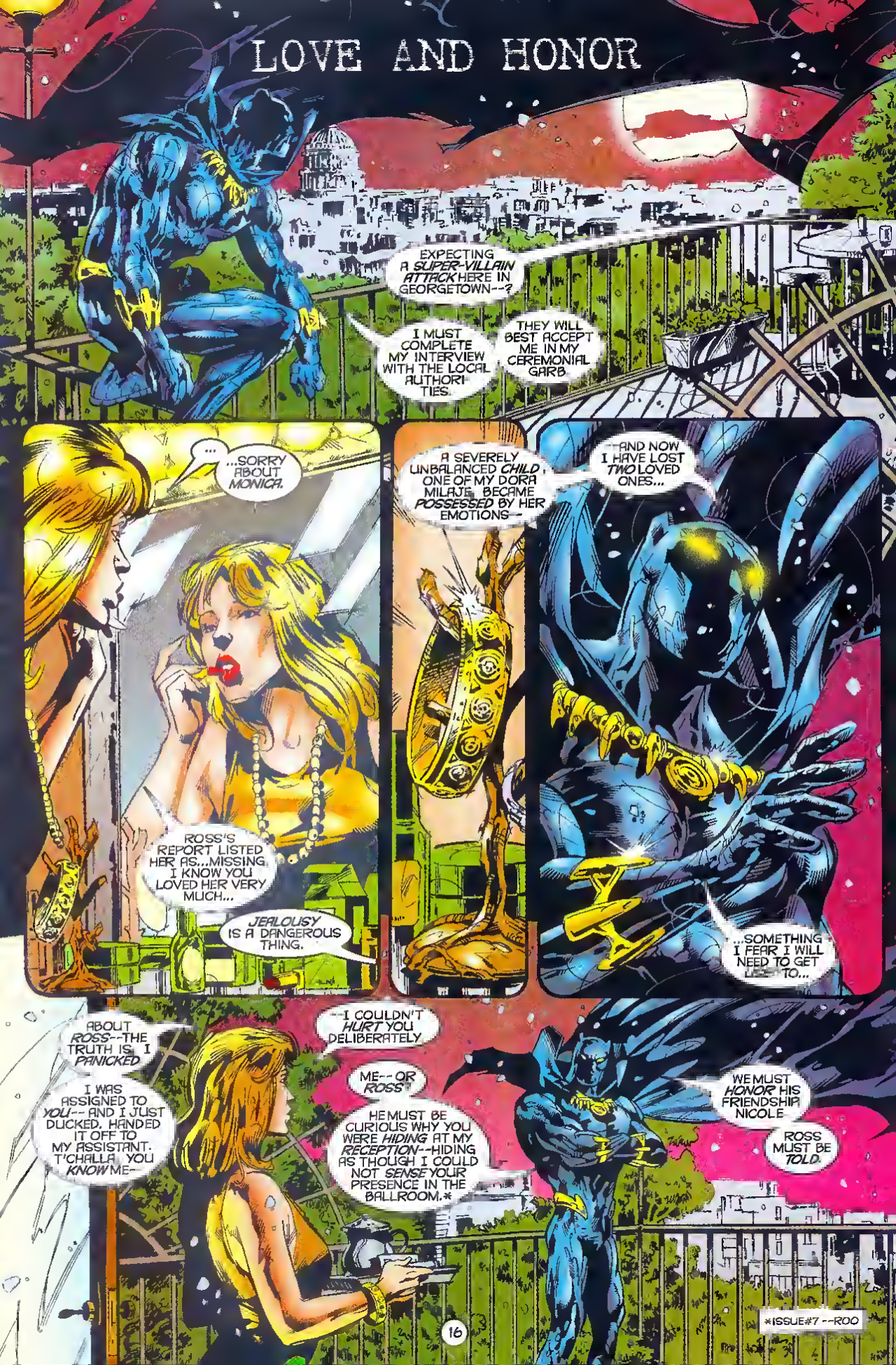











LOVE AND HONOR
EXPECTING A SUPER-VILLAIN ATTACK HERE IN GEORGETOWN--?
I MUST COMPLETE MY INTERVIEW WITH THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES.
THEY WILL BEST ACCEPT ME IN MY CEREMONIAL GARB.
...SORRY ABOUT MONICA.
ROSS'S REPORT LISTED HER AS...MISSING. I KNOW YOU LOVED HER VERY MUCH...
JEALOUSY IS A DANGEROUS THING.
A SEVERELY UNBALANCED CHILD, ONE OF MY DORA MILAJE, BECAME POSSESSED BY HER EMOTIONS--
AND NOW I HAVE LOST TWO LOVED ONES...
...SOMETHING I FEAR I WILL NEED TO GET TO...
ABOUT ROSS--THE TRUTH IS, I PANICKED
I WAS ASSIGNED TO YOU-- AND I JUST DUCKED, HANDED IT OFF TO MY ASSISTANT. T'CHALLA, YOU KNOW ME--
--I COULDN'T HURT YOU DELIBERATELY
ME-- OR ROSS
HE MUST BE CURIOUS WHY YOU WERE HIDING AT MY RECEPTION--HIDING AS THOUGH I COULD NOT SENSE YOUR PRESENCE IN THE BALLROOM.*
WE MUST HONOR HIS FRIENDSHIP NICOLE
ROSS MUST BE TOLD.
*ISSUE#7 --ROO

HIS TURN


So, Nikki, while you were busy hanging up on me--and the client was wherever HE was--
--I was about to commit my very first MURDER.


I thought to myself, "So... THIS is what REAL MEN do."
Slaughter helpless animals while screaming like idiots

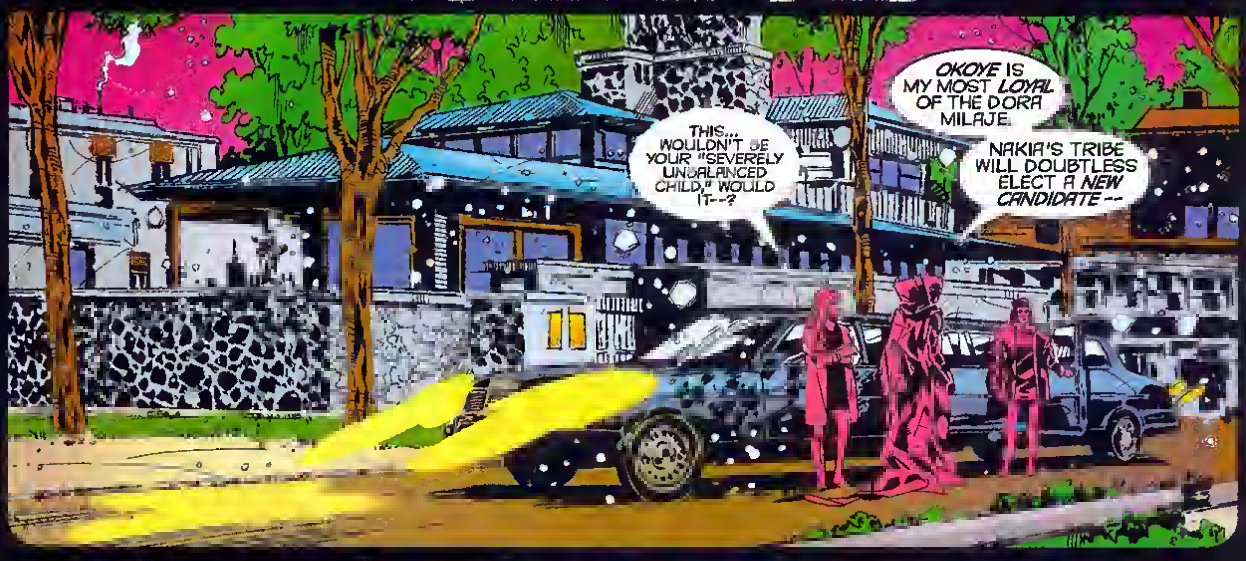

Real men.
Guess it was just my TURN.


Know something? For a few MOMENTS, it actually WORKED.
I BECAME a REAL MAN.
I mean, I actually have testosterone. Who knew.


This is how things have been DONE among the Wakandan tribes for CENTURIES.
Who was I to start changing things?
I told myself this was good for my career.


I told myself the villagers would eat for a MONTH.
I told myself the elephant had it coming
I CAN'T.
I JUST... GUYS, THIS IS *WRONG*--
I MEAN, OKAY, HE'S BIG AND MEAN AND DANGEROUS-- BUT HE REALLY HASN'T *DONE* ANYTHING OTHER THAN, WELL, *EXIST*.
AH
I'M REALLY SORRY, BUT I JUST CAN'T SEE WHY--
--AH--
THWAP
THWAP
THWAP
THWAP
THOOOOMMM!!

N'JADAKA IS DEAD

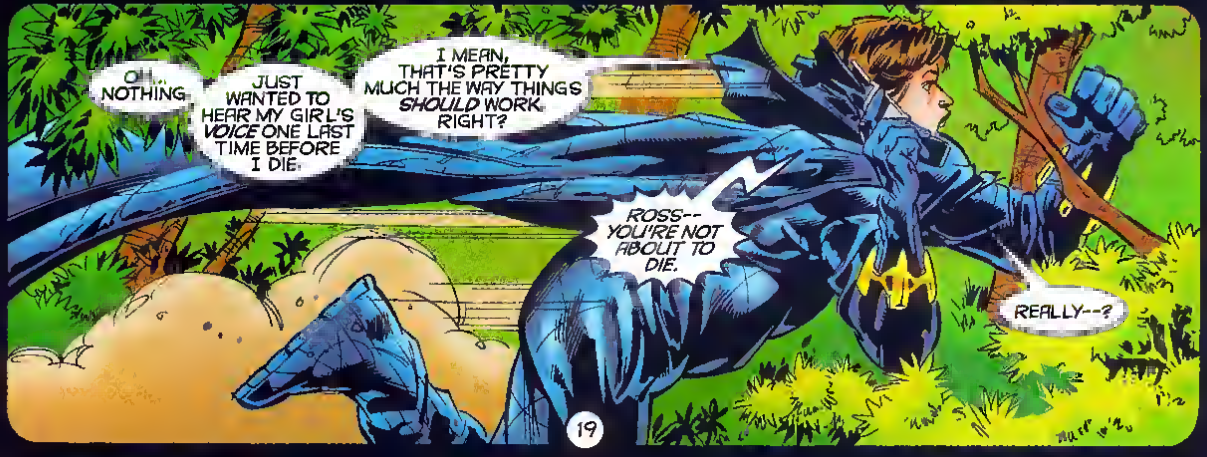




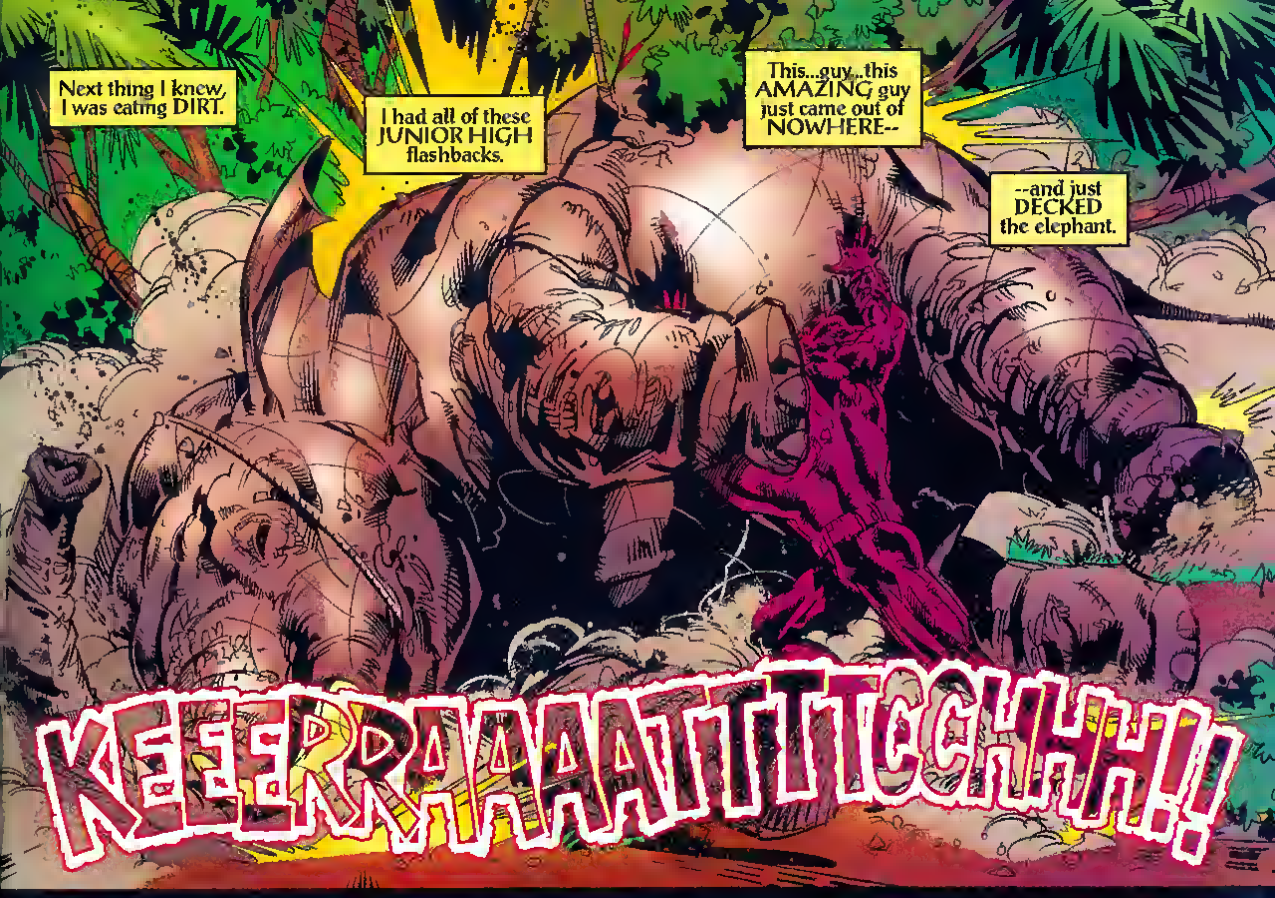


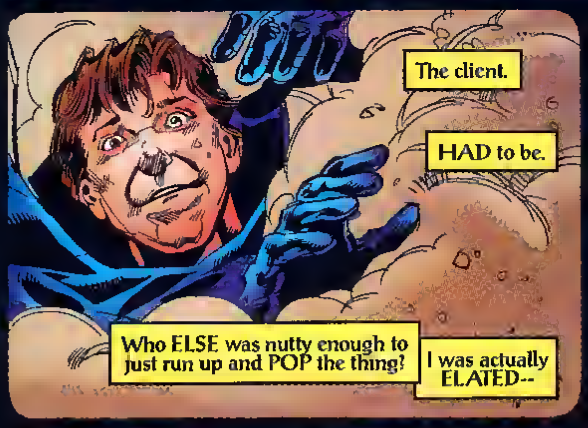


LAST RITES




THOOM
THOOM
THOOM
-- DID ANYBODY TELL HIM THAT?!?
I'M GONNA TRIP.
ALL THE CITY-FOLK TRIP. IT'S IN, LIKE, EVERY MOVIE.
I'M GONNA TRIP AND THEN HE'S GONNA EAT ME--!!
ROSS-- I'M HANGING UP, NOW.
NO-- NIK--THERE'S SO MUCH I HAVE TO TELL Y--
--YEEAKK--!!

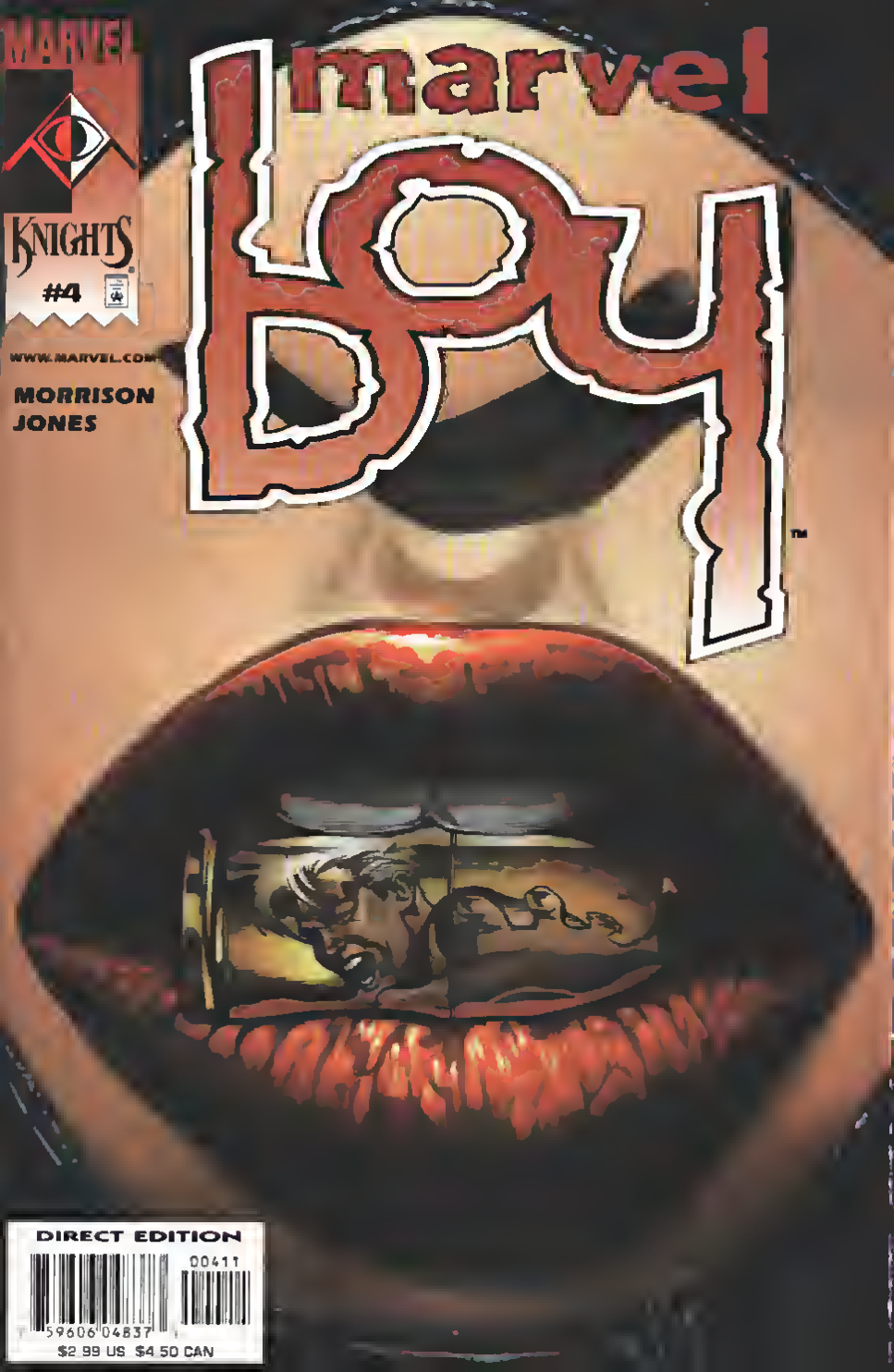

Next thing I knew, I was eating DIRT.
I had all of these JUNIOR HIGH flashbacks.
This...guy...this AMAZING guy just came out of NOWHERE--
--and just DECKED the elephant.
KEERRAAAATTTCHH!!


The client.
HAD to be.
Who ELSE was nutty enough to just run up and POP the thing?
I was actually ELATED--


--for a whole three seconds.
YOU'VE GOTTA BE KIDDING ME.
RELAX, ROSS-- HE'S JUST A PET.
HIS NAME IS PREYY.


HE SAVED MY LIFE.*
--?!? MONICA LYNNE --?!?
WE THOUGHT YOU WERE... AH...
YEAH, ME TOO. FUNNY HOW THESE THINGS TURN OUT.
ONE MINUTE I'M GETTING SHOVED OUT OF A PLANE, THE NEXT, PREYY COMES ALONG TO PLAY MOMMY.
*ISSUE #13 --ROO


OUT OF A PLANE--?! WHAT--?
LONG STORY.*
SO... YOU'VE JUST BEEN HANGING OUT IN THE WOODS ALL THIS TIME--
--PLAYING JUNGLE QUEEN WITH YOUR PET LEOPARD--?
THE LEOPARD'S NOT MINE--IT'S ERIK'S.
--?! WHO'S ERIK--?
ME--
*NAKIA TRIED TO KILL HER IN ISSUE #11-- ROO
-- I'M ERIK.
MY FRIENDS CALL ME N'JADAKA.
EVERYBODY ELSE SIMPLY CALLS ME--
DR. KILLMONGER.
NEXT
DEAD MAN STALKING


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KREE-VANN DIPLOMATIC DIRECTIVE 9X10 CALLS IT 'WHITE RUNNING.'
ALL UNNECESSARY STIMULUS IS ELIMINATED FROM CONSCIOUS AWARENESS. BODY INTELLIGENCE TAKES CONTROL.
NO DISTRACTIONS ARE PERMITTED. THE MIND IS STILL. THERE IS NO RUNNER.
'RUNNING IS ACCOMPLISHED. THAT IS ALL.'
ACCORDING TO THE MANUAL.
THOUGHTS CRACKLE IN FROM THE EDGES, EXACTLY THE WAY THEY SHOULDN'T.
THIS BREATHING. THIS GIRL. THESE PEOPLE. IT ALL.


XTERMINATRIX!
GRANT MORRISON SCRIPT
J.G.JONES ART
AVALON STUDIOS & MATT MILLR COLORS
RICHARD STARKINGS & COMICRAFT'S WES ABBOTT LETTERS
JOE QUESADA EDITOR
NANCI DARKESIAN MANAGING
BOB HARRAS EDITOR IN CHIEF
NOBODY MOVE!
I DON'T WANT TO SMELL EVEN THE TINIEST QUARK TREMBLING WAY DOWN DEEP IN YOUR HORRIBLY OUT-OF-TUNE ATOMIC STRUCTURES
DO. YOU'RE DEAD.
STAY OUT OF THIS!
I'M BUSY, OKAY?


VORP
VORP
VORP
MTA


UNH!
NN.
YOU'RE DEAD, SPACEBOY


VRPP
PWAM
HIMPH
DAD?
NO. HE GOT AWAY YES, AWAY.
HE TALKS FUNNY. LIKE HE LEARNED ENGLISH FROM A DICTIONARY.. NO, I WASN'T DOING ANYTHING LIKE THAT


HE'S HEADED YOUR WAY EVERYTHING'S FINE
I'M PERFECTLY CAPABLE, DAD!
DON'T CALL ME THAT.
Exit
I WAS NOT LOOKING AT HIS...
STOP BEING CREEPY! HE'S AN ALIEN!
Subway
VIBRANIUM SOLES... I KNOW!
THANKS FOR YOUR ADVICE, DAD.
I KNOW EXACTLY WHAT I'M DOING


YOU'VE HUNTED ALIENS BEFORE. THAT'S ALL HE IS. A BULL INSECT FROM SOME DISEASED BACKWARD-SPINNING GALAXY.
PREY. THAT'S ALL.
I KNOW YOU'VE BEEN THINKING ABOUT HIM IN ALL THE WRONG WAYS. I'M A FATHER. IT'S MY JOB TO KNOW.
HE'LL TRY TO BEGUILE YOU. THE WAY A SPIDER BEGUILES A GLORIOUS MOTH.
DON'T LET HIM.

FRZZT...
SKRUNCH


YOU'RE EVERYTHING I EVER WANTED IN A BOY.
TOO BAD
VRRRR...


BOOM!
UPTOWN
LOTTO
HOLY—
HE'S DEAD MUST
DON'T TOUCH HIM HE IS TWITCHING
EVERYBODY OUT!
I AM A VICIOUS AND EXTREMELY DANGEROUS ALIEN SOLDIER
RUN OR BECOME MY LATEST VICTIMS!
MORONS...
FLEX! CAN YOU HEAR ME? THERE'S A LUNATIC GIRL... GET ME OUT OF THIS!
SURROUNDED


LOOK AT THAT!
YOU NEVER WANTED TO BE A COP WHEN YOU WERE A KID?
NO I ALWAYS WANTED TO BE AN ACTOR. SINCE I SAW JON VOIGHT IN 'MIDNIGHT COWBOY'
HERE IT COMES
GET READY TO BLOW THE BUDGET, DAD
LIGHTS. CAMERA
HOW 'SURROUNDED'?
THERE'S EVERYWHERE! THE ENTIRE CITY BLOCK IS A BOOBSTIR!
CHAK
K-CHAK


ACTION
AAOW
SHUHH
PUHRRFLEX PLEX HELP
LET ME
SLIAK
SAY GOURANGA!
HUKK


...IT'S NOT RIGHT...
I'VE DONE NONE OF YOU HARM. MY PEOPLE'S MISSION WAS PEACE, HARMONY AND SUCHLIKE. IN PITY'S NAME...
HOW ABOUT ONE MOMENT'S MERCY TILL I CATCH MY BREATH
THE EXPENSE WAS JUSTIFIED
WE KILL HIM IN PLAIN SIGHT AND EVERYONE THINKS WE'RE FILMING A BLOCKBUSTER
WHAT DOES ONE DO TO A COCKROACH?
STAMP ON IT AND STAMP ON IT. STAMP AGAIN AND AGAIN AND AGAIN.
'AS MANY STAMPS AS IT TAKES. UNTIL THERE'S NOTHING LEFT BUT MESS'
I'M NOT TEN YEARS OLD ANY MORE.
PITY
IT WAS ALL PONIES, BALLET AND DISSECTING THE KITTENS THEN.
HE WAS LOOKING AT YOU WASN'T HE? THE CREEPY-CRAWLY WITH HIS BEADY EYES


OH, FOR GOD'S SAKE, DAD
SNAP
POP
POP
WOULD ANYONE WANT TO LOOK AT ME?
YOU DID THIS TO ME
I MADE YOU STRONG.
YOU ARE EVERYTHING TO ME, MY STAR
MY GREATEST TREASURE. WHAT I DO IS FOR YOU. THIS WORLD I WILL MAKE IS FOR YOU TO INHERIT. MY LOVE


SNAP
SNAP
NOW COVER YOUR SCARS
ONLY A DAD WOULD WANT TO LOOK AT THOSE
HE'LL BITE OUT YOUR BEATING HEART THEY ALL DO IN THE END INSECTS IN THE FORM OF BOYS
DAD
WOULDN'T YOU SAY THERE WAS SOMETHING WEIRD ABOUT OUR RELATIONSHIP?
NO
NO, THAT'S NOT THE WORD I'D CHOOSE
THE SPECIAL BULLET YOUR GOLDEN BULLET IS FOR HIS HEART I WILL USE MY REPULSOR EMITTERS TO TEAR IT FROM HIS OBLITERATED RIBCAGE


YOU FIRED A COSMIC RAY PULSE YESTERDAY I HAVE PEOPLE ON THE LOOKOUT FOR THAT SORT OF THING COSMIC RAYS ARE MY HOBBY AS YOU KNOW
DO YOU KNOW WHAT HAPPENS IN A ROACH MOTEL?
THE GLOVE-BATTERY GENERATES REPULSOR RAYS. CLOSE RANGE IMPACT LEVELS ARE AROUND ONE HUNDRED POUNDS PER SQUARE INCH.
A MONSTER LIKE YOU MIGHT SURVIVE MAYBE FOUR HITS. SIX IF YOU'RE WILLING TO TRY FOR THE RECORD.
YOU HAVE ONE LAST CHANCE TO STAY ALIVE LITTLE SURVIVOR
THE CRAFT THAT BROUGHT YOU HERE IS HIDDEN SOMEWHERE NEARBY LEAD ME TO ITS COSMIC RAY ENGINE
SIX HITS? WHAT DO YOU THINK?
THAT'S A TERRIFIC OUTFIT. WHAT'S THE MOVIE YOU'LE IN? WHAT'S IT CALLED?
IT'S CALLED "**** YOU AND THE MONKEY YOU MARRIED." GRANDDAD
KA-
EH?


AND ANOTHER!! FOR LOOKING AT MY DAUGHTER...
SHE LOVED IT
I CAN SHRED THE HEART IN YOUR CHEST WITH ONE SUSTAINED CYCLE ROACH.
LEAD ME TO YOUR VESSEL.
SHE LOVED THE WAY I LOOKED AT HER!
NNNAARR

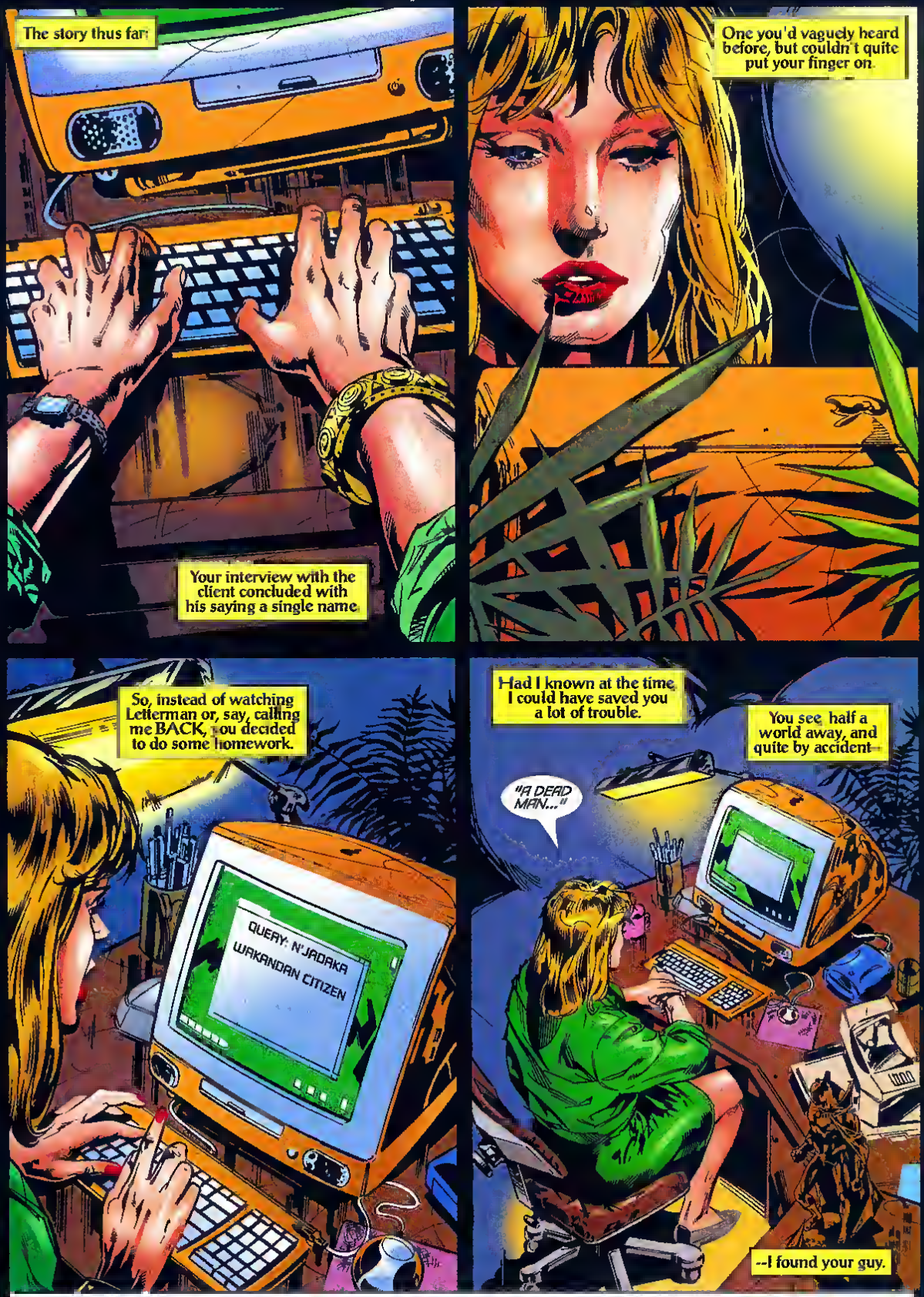

I GAVE HIM EVERY OPPORTUNITY
PREPARE TO PUT HIM OUT OF HIS MISERY MY LOVE
DADDY I'VE GIVEN THIS SOME THOUGHT
CLICK
BLAM


KABLAM!
I REALLY WANT TO BE NORMAL
NNNNAAAAAA

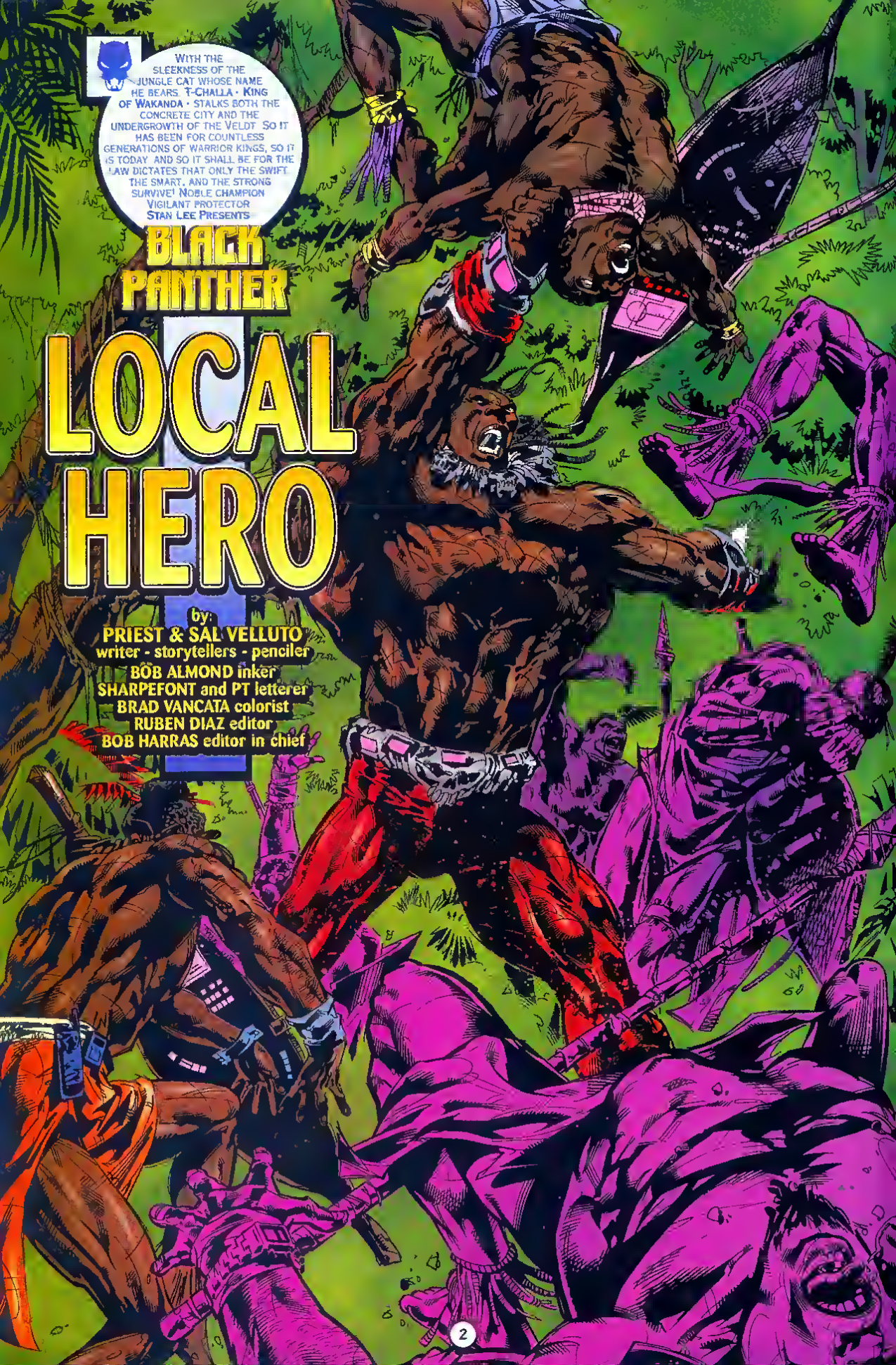

WHAT HAVE I DONE?
NO-VARR?
THAT'S YOUR NAME, SPACEBOY?
WHAT'S A PLEX AND WHY IS MY WATCH-RADIO TALKING LIKE THIS?
WHAT? HOW ABOUT MAKING SOME SENSE?
JUST TELL ME WHERE, PLEX
NOH-VARR IS DYING. WHERE ARE YOU?
SHE'S ILL. SICK IN THE HEAD WITH HORMONES A GIRL HER AGE... BREAK A DAD'S HEART
WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT GIRLS HER AGE?
FOUR YEARS AGO YOU WERE A MARINE SERGEANT NAMED MIKE. YOU WHEY-FACED MORON.
THEY WENT DOWN HERE DOCTOR MIDAS
OHH
HE'S CONTROLLING HER THOUGHTS MAKING HER MAD
BUT UNDERSTAND THIS...
I AM MIDAS.
I TURN EVERYTHING TO MY ADVANTAGE
EVEN HER
MY DAUGHTER WILL LEAD US DIRECTLY TO HIS SPACESHIP WHEREVER HE HAS IT HIDDEN
AND WE WILL RAIN HELL AND JUDGMENT UPON OUR REBELLIOUS CHILDREN
PREPARE FOR WAR AND FOLLOW ME
COMING NEXT:
ZEROZERO: YEAROFLOVE


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WITH THE SLEEKNESS OF THE JUNGLE CAT WHOSE NAME HE BEARS, T'CHALLA - KING OF WAKANDA - STALKS BOTH THE CONCRETE CITY AND THE UNDERGROWTH OF THE VELDT. SO IT HAS BEEN FOR COUNTLESS GENERATIONS OF WARRIOR KINGS, SO IT IS TODAY. AND SO IT SHALL BE FOR THE LAW DICTATES THAT ONLY THE SWIFT, THE SMART, AND THE STRONG SURVIVE! NOBLE CHAMPION VIGILANT PROTECTOR STAN LEE PRESENTS
BLACK PANTHER
LOCAL HERO
by:
PRIEST & SAL VELLUTO
writer - storytellers - penciler
BOB ALMOND inker
SHARPEFONT and PT letterer
BRAD VANCATA colorist
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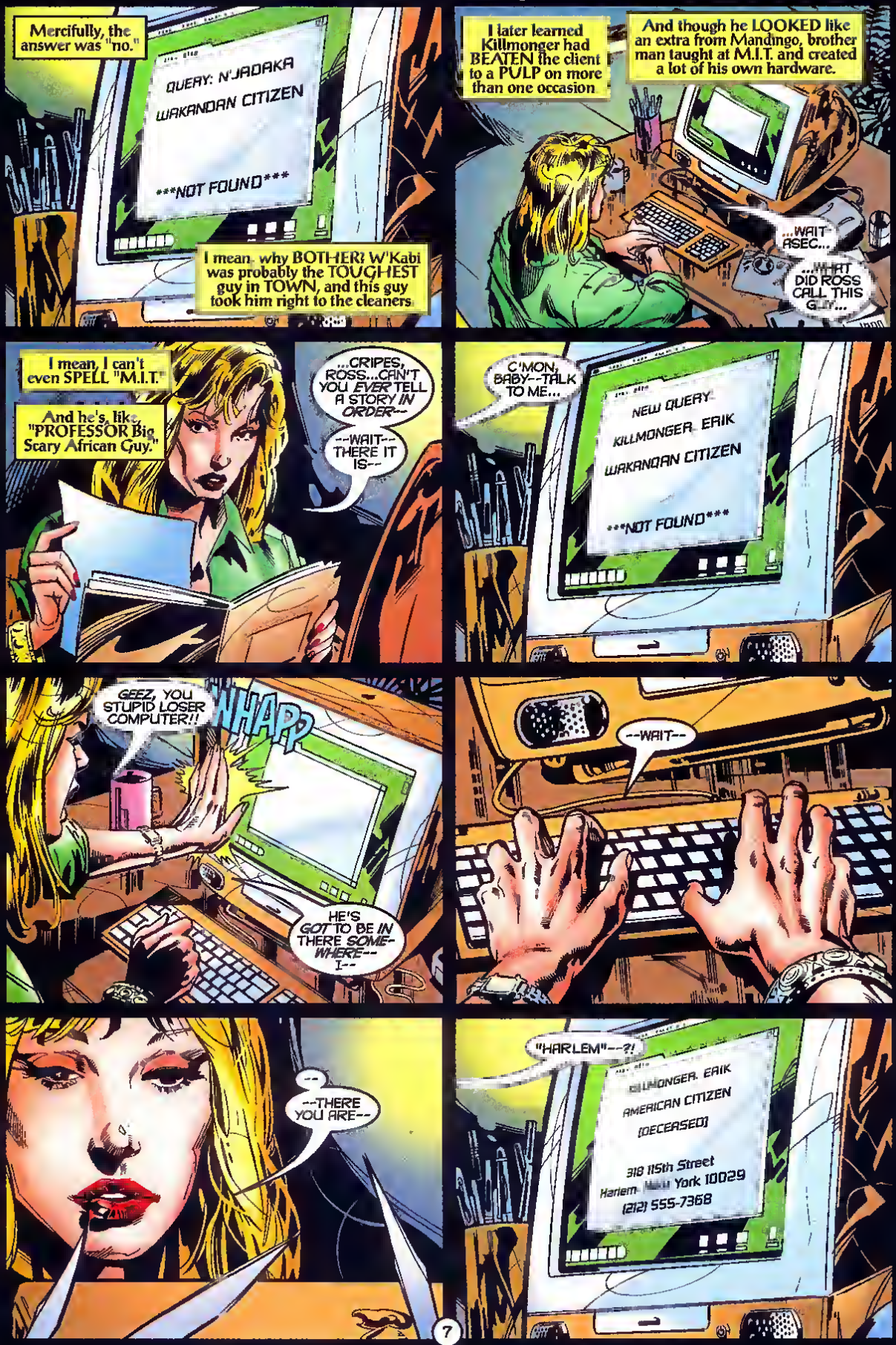

Two things I noticed right away:
The guy was nearly seven feet tall.
And he wouldn't stop SMILING.
Meanwhile, PREYY, the guy's pet leopard, kept STEPPING on me.
I wasn't even worth his bother to EAT.
I was kind of insulted...
But, like his master, I guess Preyy had other things on his mind.
<AH--I SEE YOU WARRIORS HAVE LOST NONE OF YOUR LEGENDARY METTLE!>
<I INSIST YOU JOIN ME FOR A FEAST!>
<TO DO LESS WOULD DISHONOR YOUR BRAVERY--!>
SHUT UP.
KEERAAKK
...YES...
...W'KABI, OLD FRIEND STILL GOT THAT BIONIC ARM, HUH?*
*YES, HE DOES. SEE THE JUNGLE FICTION SERIES. --ROO

FIRST: I'M NOT YOUR BLASTED FRIEND.
SECOND: YOU'LL KNOW ABOUT MY ARM ONCE I HAVE BROKEN YOUR NECK WITH IT!
It was like a cafeteria brawl in high school.
...and, as usual, I was on the floor.
PREYY.
RRRWOOWRLL
The MAN-EATING LEOPARD was new, though.
PREYY--
--KNOCK IT OFF!
LET THEM WORK IT OUT.
THWAPP
Monica Lynne was a wannabe jazz singer who was briefly engaged to the client--
--and got shoved out of a plane to find herself lost--
--wandering through the jungles surrounding Wakanda.
Now she slaps leopards around.
UH... THANKS.
THINK YOU CAN PULL THAT OFF WITH THEM--?!
GOTTA TELL YOU, MINISTER-- I'VE MISSED THIS.
THE CONSTANT STRUGGLE BETWEEN YOUR WORLD AND MINE.
THERE IS ONLY ONE WORLD, PRETENDER--
--AND T'CHALLA IS THE RULER!
"PRETENDER"--? W'KABI--


--SURELY, BY NOW, YOU BELIEVE--?
KKTHOOM
GHAAAKK--!
I BELIEVE YOU ARE A CHARLATAN--
--STEALING THE SOUL OF A DEAD MAN--
YES. A MAN YOU KNEW BETTER THAN
C'MON— I LOOK LIKE HIM.
I SOUND LIKE HIM—
KERAKKK
--NOW, LET ME SHOW YOU--
KAPP
--HOW I KILL LIKE HIM.
ERIK.
YO-- ERIK--
--CHILL.
FRRSSWTCH!


STILL WITH US, W'KABI?
...? MS. LYNNE...
YEAH, I KNOW. NEVER ON YOUR CHRISTMAS LIST.
...I...I...
HAD ME *ARRESTED* FOR *MURDER* AND NEARLY *BROKE* WITH YOUR *KING* OVER HIS INVOLVEMENT WITH ME.*
I REMEMBER.
W'KABI
SO DOES *HE*.
...AH... PARDON ME--
--BUT, THIS "REGENT" BUSINESS--
--DOES THAT MEAN I HAVE TO FIGHT THAT GUY?

HE'S DEAD, JIM


Mercifully, the answer was "no."
QUERY: N'JADAKA
WAKANDAN CITIZEN
NOT FOUND
I mean, why BOTHER? W'Kabi was probably the TOUGHEST guy in TOWN, and this guy took him right to the cleaners.
I later learned Killmonger had BEATEN the client to a PULP on more than one occasion.
And though he LOOKED like an extra from Mandingo, brother man taught at M.I.T. and created a lot of his own hardware.
...WAIT ASEC...
...WHAT DID ROSS CALL THIS G...
I mean, I can't even SPELL "M.I.T."
And he's, like, "PROFESSOR Big Scary African Guy."
...CRIPES, ROSS...CAN'T YOU EVER TELL A STORY IN ORDER--
--WAIT--THERE IT IS--
C'MON, BABY--TALK TO ME...
NEW QUERY
KILLMONGER, ERIK
WAKANDAN CITIZEN
NOT FOUND
GEEZ, YOU STUPID LOSER COMPUTER!!
WHAP!
HE'S GOT TO BE IN THERE SOMEWHERE--I--
--WAIT--
--
--THERE YOU ARE--
"HARLEM"--?!
KILLMONGER, ERIK
AMERICAN CITIZEN
[DECEASED]
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APOLLO
OEDIPUS


I've only been to Harlem ONCE.
An awards winning thing at the Apollo And I was TERRIFIED.
SERGEANT TORK--
I mean, it was so stupid. Like I'd come out of the joint and find a mob of soul brothers waiting to bash my head in.

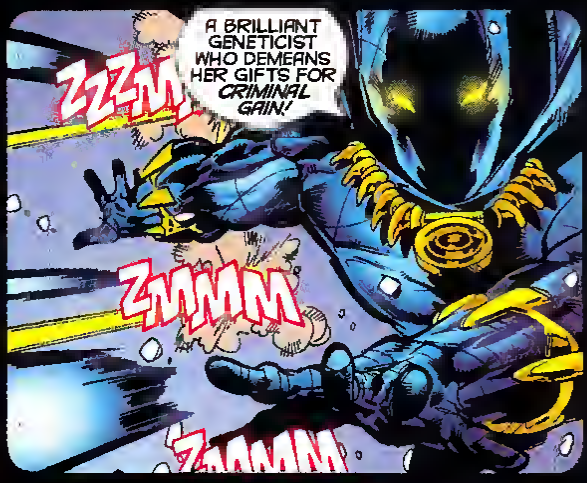

--GHAH--!!
WILL YOU PLEASE STOP DOING THAT?!?
TIE A BELL AROUND YOUR NECK OR SOMETHIN'!!
AND-- HOW CAN YOU WALK WITH A CAPE THAT LONG?!?


LIKE THIS.
F/K A STUPID QUESTION...
HOW'D IT GO UP THERE?

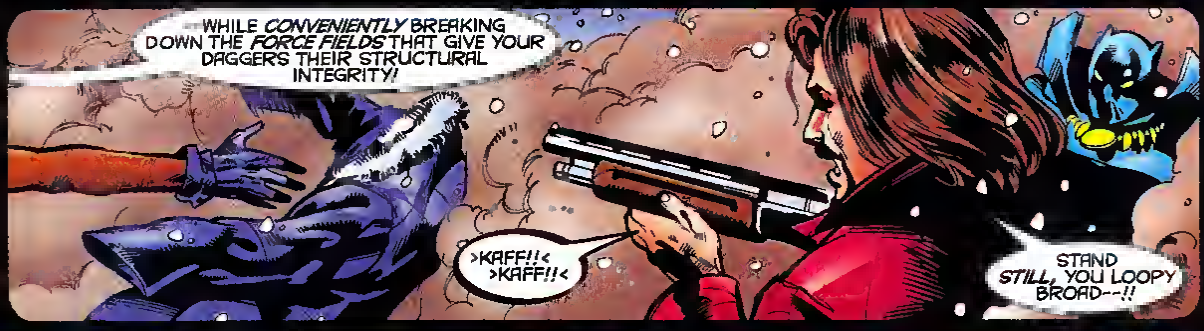

I'VE FOUND NOTHING.
318
N'JADAKA HAS INDEED RETURNED FROM THE GRAVE, HE HAS NOT RETURNED HERE.
DID YOU REALLY EXPECT HE WOULD--?


WHO THE FREAK--?!?
--GEEEZ--!!
KERAAKK


BLAAM
BLAAM
BLA
OH, THAT'S RIGHT.
CAN'T SNEAK UPON A GUY WITH ENHANCED SENSES.
MY BAD.
YOU ARE NIGHTSHADE.


A BRILLIANT GENETICIST WHO DEMEANS HER GIFTS FOR CRIMINAL GAIN!
ZZZM
ZMMM
ZMMMM


YOU READ MY PRESS RELEASE!
I'M TOUCHED!
BY THE WAY, THE ANSWER IS REFRACTIVE SILICONE COATING IN THE BABY OIL I PUT ON THIS MORNING
KEEPS MY SKIN SMOOTH AND SILKY--


WHILE CONVENIENTLY BREAKING DOWN THE FORCE FIELDS THAT GIVE YOUR DAGGER'S THEIR STRUCTURAL INTEGRITY!
>KAFF!!<
>KAFF!!<
STAND STILL, YOU LOOPY BROAD--!!


IMPRESSIVE.
UNDER DIFFERENT CIRCUMSTANCES, I'D HAVE LIKED TO COMPARE THEORIES WITH YOU.
GENETIC SCIENCE IS NOT MY STRONGEST AREA. REGRETTABLY. HOWEVER--
-YOU MUST NOW GO TO PRISON.
KAAAP


I... I AM SO THRILLED.
A REAL AFRICAN KING... THIS REALLY IS SUCH AN [illegible] YOUR HIGHN[illegible]S...
...I FEEL HORRIBLE ABOUT DOING [illegible]


KERRAKKK
LEAVE HER ALONE!
--?! SERGEANT TORK--?!
--THIS!!
NIGHTSHADE'S BULLETS.
GAS PELLETS-- UNDOUBTEDLY CONTAINING THE MUTATED PHEROMONAL EXTRACT SHE USES TO ENSORCEL MEN!
MY APOLOGIES, FRIEND TORK-- MY ENERGY DAGGER WILL ONLY STUN YOU--
--YES, AND DISTRACT YOU FOR THE FRACTION OF A SECOND I NEED--
--TO DO THIS!!
YOU ARE A DEADLY ADVERSARY, HIGHNESS. NO OFFENSE, BUT I'D MUCH RATHER BE FIGHTING ANYONE ELSE.
MY GUESS IS YOUR UNIFORM USES CHEMICAL GATES AS FILTERS SO MY LITTLE GAS TRICK IS WASTED ON YOU.
WHICH TAKES US TO THE NEXT LEVEL--
--A PARALYTIC ENZYME IN AN ACIDIC BASE THAT WILL EAT THROUGH YOUR UNIFORM--
--AND ATTACK YOUR CENTRAL NERVOUS SYSTEM ON CONTACT...
...QUITE A GRIP YOU'VE GOT THERE...


...BUT SOONER THAN LATER, YOUR MUSCLES WILL STOP OBEYING YOU.
NOW, THE JOB CALLS FOR ME TO KILL YOU—
KEEE-RAKKKK


--BUT I THINK THAT'S A REALLY BAD IDEA.
FOR ME TO DO IT, I MEAN.
I JUST ADMIRE YOU TOO MUCH.

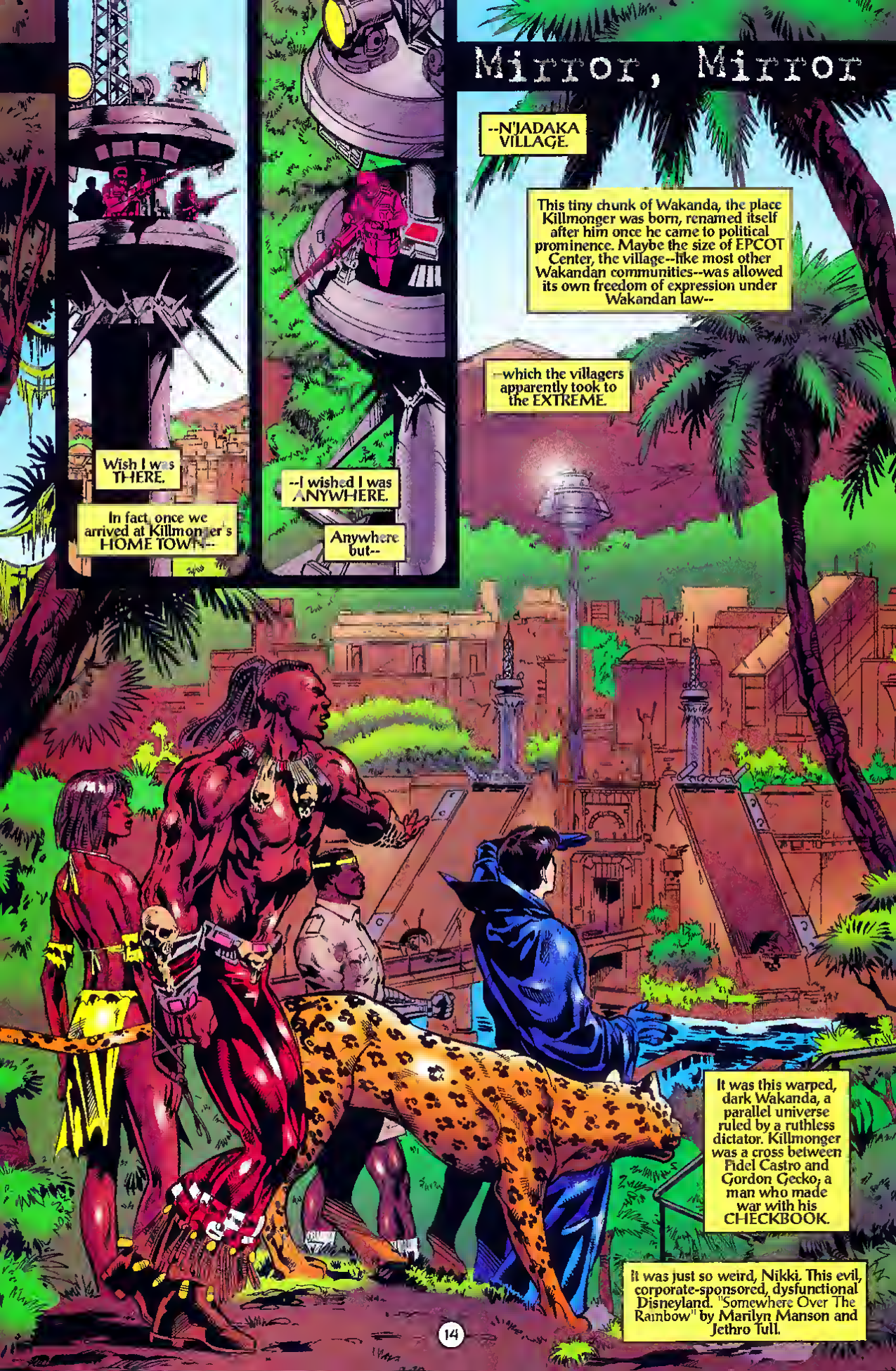

CAN'T EVEN WATCH
SOME OF MY NEW... FRIENDS... WILL HAVE TO TAKE CARE OF THAT FOR ME
I KNOW YOU'LL FIND THIS HARD TO BELIEVE—


"--BUT I REALLY DO ADMIRE YOU.


"YOU WILL FEEL EVERYTHING-- AT LEAST UNTIL YOU PASS OUT.
"WONDERING" RIGHT UP TO THE END--


"--WHO WILL SAVE YOU--?"


Sam Wilson was a Harlem social worker who was bitten by a radioactive sea gull and became...
...THE FALCON
I believe his super powers were limited to being able to talk to his BIRD, and make a truly SPECIAL pot of collard greens.
Years ago, the client designed the Falcon's FLYING RIG, which included jet-powered glider wings.
Maybe that's why the Falcon was looking out for him.
Of course, maybe it had something to do with the fact that Sergeant Tork is one of the Falcon's best friends.
Whichever it was, Falc's timing was pretty darn good.
--though, you realize, of course, I have to believe the client would've found some way out of that mess on his own.
Okoye--the SANE Dora Milaje-- fed the client some of the HEART-SHAPED HERB that gives the client his enhanced abilities.
A hospital might've been a good move, too, but okay. Big dirty bag of roots--yeah, go for it.


Mirror, Mirror
--N'JADAKA VILLAGE.
This tiny chunk of Wakanda, the place Killmonger was born, renamed itself after him once he came to political prominence. Maybe the size of EPCOT Center, the village--like most other Wakandan communities--was allowed its own freedom of expression under Wakandan law--
--which the villagers apparently took to the EXTREME.
Wish I was THERE.
In fact, once we arrived at Killmonger's HOME TOWN--
--I wished I was ANYWHERE.
Anywhere but--
It was this warped, dark Wakanda, a parallel universe ruled by a ruthless dictator. Killmonger was a cross between Fidel Castro and Gordon Gecko, a man who made war with his CHECKBOOK.
It was just so weird, Nikki. This evil, corporate-sponsored, dysfunctional Disneyland. "Somewhere Over The Rainbow" by Marilyn Manson and Jethro Tull.


Not a Panther God icon in sight. The client's warm and fuzzy intellectual family--
--replaced with DAY TRADERS and ARMED GOONS--
KING
OPEN 24 HOURS
KBUSTER
GEORGE OF THE JUNGLE
--among OTHER oddities...
...YOU'VE GOTTA BE KIDDING ME...
The WATCHTOWER was Killmonger's home base. A sterile glass house atop a space needle.
The MINUTE I saw it, I KNEW, before this thing was over, it was going to blow up.
These things ALWAYS blow up.
What was SCARY, though, was--
--I think Killmonger knew it, too.
In fact, I think that's why he PUT it there.
WHY DON'T WE ALL FRESHEN UP A LITTLE AND MEET FOR DINNER IN, SAY, AN HOUR--?

MEET GEORGE JETSON



eK (classified)

US DEPARTMENT OF STATE
CLASSIFIED

Real name: Erik Killmonger
Former Aliases: N'Jadaka (birth name)
Identity: Publicly known
Current Occupation: N/A
Legal status: Citizen of Wakanda with a criminal record (high treason)
Place of birth: N'Jadaka village, Wakanda
Marital status: Single
Known relatives: None- both parents deceased
Group affiliation: None
Extent of education: Ph D. Engineering, MBA

Physical description
Height: 195cm, 6' 6"
Weight: 80 kg, 175 lbs.
Eyes: Brown
Hair: Black

Powers and Abilities
Intelligence: Above Average
Strength: Peak human
Speed: Athlete
Stamina: Peak human
Durability: Peak human
Agility: Athlete
Reflexes: Athlete

Fighting Skills: Killmonger is an exceptionally proficient hand to hand combatant. While he has undoubtedly been trained professionally, the exact styles and techniques that he uses are unknown.

History
When Ulysses Klaw first came to Wakanda, his mercenaries gathered the young men from the small outlying villages to be used as slaves for mining Vibranium. However Klaw was soundly defeated at that time, due largely to the actions of the young Prince T'Chaka. The mercenaries fled back to America, taking some of the Wakandan slaves with them. One of those youths was a young man known as N'Jadaka whose parents had both been killed by Klaw's men.

Upon reaching America, N'Jadaka managed to escape his captives, but had no way of returning to his homeland. N'Jadaka blamed King T'Chaka for his situation, and by extension his son T'Challa. He changed his name to Erik Killmonger and swore vengeance on the Panther-king.

After spending years preparing for his eventual return to Wakanda, Killmonger recognized the Black Panther while he was with the Avengers and contacted him, telling him how he came to be in America. T'Challa arranged a transport to take him from the tenement building where he stayed in Harlem back to Wakanda at the first opportunity. Unknown to the Panther, Killmonger also smuggled the man known as Venom back to Wakanda with him.

Killmonger returned to his village and began to sow the seeds of insurrection amongst them. He gathered a veritable army of followers, which he called his death regiments, and appointed leaders over them, giving them titles that he had learnt in the West. His followers named his small village "N'Jadaka" in honor of its new leader.

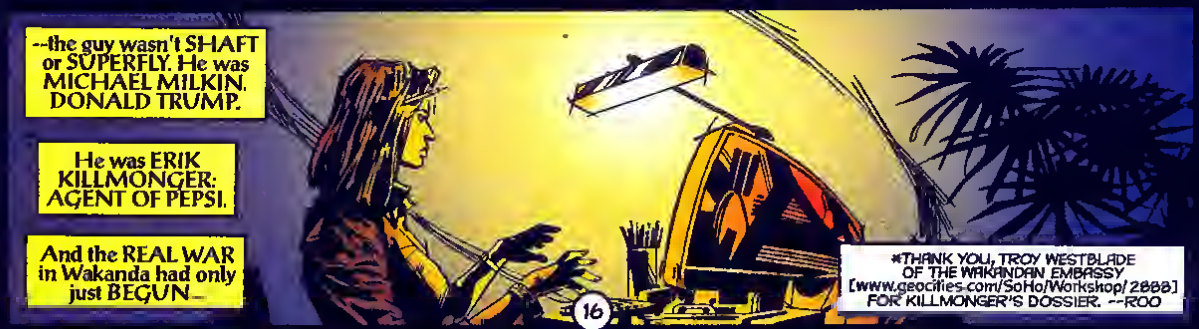
He found a place called Resurrection Altar in a remote part of Wakanda and subjected many of his followers to the unearthly radiation which flowed from it, granting some of them superhuman abilities. He also began mining out the great Vibranium mound from below with the assistance of his death regiments. The Panther, still serving with the Avengers, got word that trouble was brewing in Wakanda and returned quickly.

After Killmonger destroyed a small fishing village, the Panther confronted him atop Warrior Falls, where he battled both him and his pet leopard named Preyy. T'Challa was defeated and thrown from the Falls, only his agility and the proximity of Monica Lynne saving him.

The Panther and his army then took the fight to Killmonger, attacking his village and decimating the army that he had there. Unfortunately Killmonger wasn't there at the time, but the Panther learned from his followers that he was at Resurrection Altar. Here Killmonger once more defeated the king in physical combat, and left him for dead. The Panther survived and tracked Killmonger to the Serpent Valley, where he was capturing great prehistoric beasts to use. Killmonger left the weakened T'Challa to battle a Tyrannosaurus Rex, certain that the beast would finally finish him. However with the help of a strange imp, the Panther prevailed and went on to make it back to Central Wakanda in time for Killmonger's final attack. Killmonger then attacked Central Wakanda with his entire remaining army, along with a horde of stampeding dinosaurs. The Panther's loyal army battled valiantly, but all seemed lost when Killmonger once again held the Panther atop Warrior Falls preparing to throw him to his death. Only the intervention of Kantu, a small child whose father had been killed by the death regiments, saved the King's life as he knocked Killmonger over the edge instead.

Current Whereabouts
Killmonger's body was found a week after his death, smashed to a pulp by the rapids.





LOCAL HERO


...but, I'm getting ahead of myself again.
Over in Harlem, Okoye used a handy can of "Stop Eating Through My Clothes!" compound on the Falcon's gloves.
HOW'S IT GOING OVER THERE--?
Though I think the client still owed my man a new pair of Isotoners.


I AM WELL, OLD FRIEND
THE STING OF MY SHATTERED EGO IS ALL THAT TRULY AILS ME.
I UNDERESTIMATED NIGHTSHADE. IT WILL NOT HAPPEN AGAIN. THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP.


THE LEAST I COULD DO, CONSIDERING ALL YOU'VE DONE FOR ME. * SHOULD I ASK WHAT THAT WAS ALL ABOUT?
IF ONLY I KNEW. I HAVE BEEN ASSIMILATING INTELLIGENCE ON N'JADAKA, AN OLD NEMESIS--
*THE PANTHER DESIGNED THE FALCON'S GLIDER WINGS. --ROO


--WHO HAS APPARENTLY RISEN FROM THE GRAVE JUST TO MAKE ME MISERABLE.
IF I AM CORRECT, NIGHTSHADE IS EITHER KNOWINGLY OR UNKNOWINGLY HIS AGENT--
--HE WAS HYDRO-MAN BEFORE HER. AND WHO KNOWS HOW MANY YET TO COME.

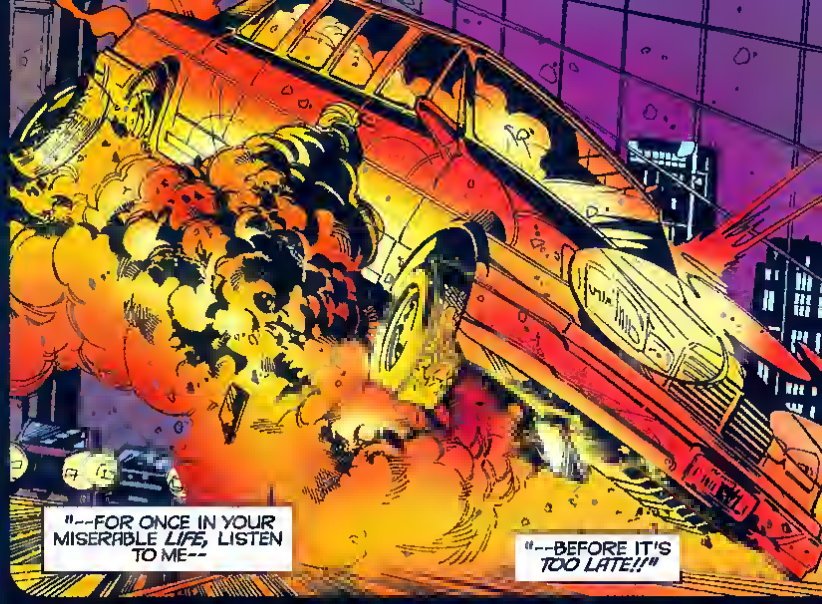

HE REALLY WANTS YOU DEAD, HUH?
HAD NIGHTSHADE SUCCEEDED IN KILLING ME, HER OWN LIFELESS BODY WOULD HAVE BEEN FOUND MOMENTS LATER.
N'JADAKA IS NOT TRYING TO KILL ME--


--HE WISHES TO DISGRACE ME.
HIS GOAL IS COLLATERAL DAMAGE--THE DESTRUCTION OF PROPERTY AND DEATH OF INNOCENTS.
THE RECENT COUP IN WAKANDA HAS WEAKENED MY POLITICAL STANDING HERE AND ABROAD. HE MEANS TO CAPITALIZE ON THAT.
HOW?
THAT IS THE KEY TO DEFEATING HIM.
YOUR ENEMY'S TRUE MOTIVE IS NEARLY ALWAYS HIS GREATEST WEAKNESS.
SO WHAT'S OUR NEXT MOVE?
"WE" DO NOT HAVE A "MOVE," MY FRIEND.
DESPITE TONIGHT'S DEBACLE, I ASSURE YOU I AM MORE THAN ADEQUATE TO THE TASK BEFORE ME.
I SHALL RETURN TO MY BASE IN BROOKLYN--AWAIT N'JADAKA'S NEXT MOVE.
IT'S YOUR CALL, PANTHER.
GOOD LUCK--AND GREAT SEEING YOU AGAIN!
THE MASTER APPROACHES.
WE MUST MAKE READY.
LOOK, GRAMPA--LIKE I TOLD YOU BEFORE--
--I APPRECIATE YOU BAILIN' ME OUT OF THE STIR, BUT THIS TRIP TO A NEW YORK GHETTO HAS KIND OF LOST ITS NOVELTY--
--AND WITH MY BEING UNDERAGE, AN INNOCENT IN THE FLOWER OF MY YOUTH AND ALL--
--YOU MAY WANNA RETHINK THINGS.
YOU ARE THE BLOODLINE OF THE DORA MILAJE. IT HAS BEEN DECIDED--YOU SHALL SERVE.
OH, YEAH. YOU BET "SERVE."
YOU JUST HOLD YOUR BREATH NOW.

SOCKS

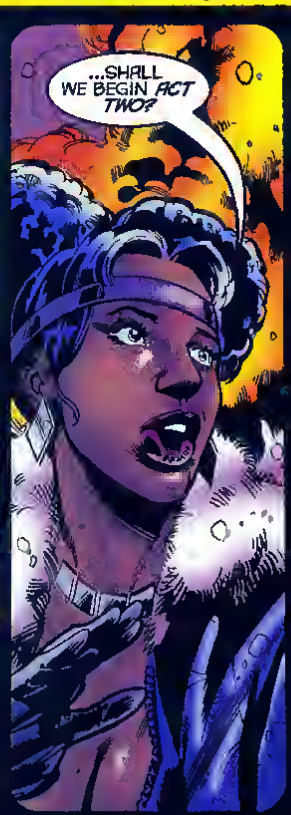

I had a few moments before dinner, so I asked to make a few calls. I figured EVERY prisoner gets to make at least one, right?
I expected some grizzled hunchback holding a knife to my throat
Instead, I got 13 secured lines and an executive suite.
We weren't prisoners.
Killmonger would've let me call the President if I wanted.
YES.
MISS ME?
OF COURSE. CAN'T YOU TELL?
LOOK, ROSS, I'M A LITTLE BUSY RIGHT NOW--
REALLY? WHAT'RE YOU WEARING?
ROSS...
I'VE GOT A TWO-PIECE OUTFIT--SOCKS.
I'M HANGING UP NOW.
HEY--HEY--HEY--OCP SECTION CHIEF--DON'T YOU WANT MY REPORT ON HOW IT'S GOING--?
FINE. HOW'S IT GOING?
FINE. I DIDN'T GET TRAMPLED BY THE ELEPHANT--I KNOW HOW WORRIED YOU WERE ABOUT THAT.
GOOD-BYE, ROSS--
AND THE LEOPARD DIDN'T EAT ME, EITHER...
...FIGURES...
HANGING UP...BUH-BYE...
The SKRULL Contingency Measures & Procedures
ANYWAY, SO NOW WE'RE HANGING OUT WITH THIS GUY ERIK.
YOU SHOULD SEE THIS VILLAGE, NIK--
--I FEEL LIKE I'M ON THAT EVIL VERSION OF THE ENTERPRISE--Y'KNOW--WHEN SPOCK HAD A BEARD--
ERIK--KILLMONGER--?
GIVE THE GAL A COOKIE. SO YOU'RE WEARRR-ING--?


"ROSS...YOU'VE GOT TO GET OUT OF THERE! THE GUY'S A *HOMICIDAL LOON!*"
"*RELAX*, NIK--WE'RE GONNA GRAB SOME *EATS* AND THEN HEAD BACK.
"NOTHING TO *WORRY* ABOUT."
"ROSS--


"--FOR ONCE IN YOUR MISERABLE *LIFE*, LISTEN TO ME--
"--BEFORE IT'S *TOO LATE!!*"




MY, MY, MY, YOUR HIGHNESS.
I CAN'T *TELL* YOU HOW MUCH I HATED TO DO THAT.
BUT, I GUESS THESE THINGS JUST COULDN'T BE *AVOIDED*
SO...


...SHALL WE BEGIN *ACT TWO?*


IF YOU INSIST.
WELL, TRUTHFULLY YOUR HIGHNESS I'M NOT THE ONE INSISTING--
--I'M AFRAID MY PARTNERS ARE JUST A TAD LESS RESPECT-FUL OF YOUR POSITION.
--MORGAN!
--COTTONMOUTH!
--STILETTO!
--COCKROACH!
THERE'S A BIG SUITCASE, STUFFED WITH BIG CASH FOR BIG MORGAN WAITING FOR ME WHEN I DELIVER YOUR COLD, DEAD--
--EH--?
WHAT THE MOTHAH--?!?
JUST TRYING TO GET YOUR ATTENTION, BIG GUY.
IT'S RUDE TO MAKE A SPEECH TO ONLY HALF YOUR AUDIENCE--


--SO MAYBE YOU'D LIKE TO START AGAIN---
--SO WE CAN ALL GET OUR GROOVE ON!
NEXT: DOLOMITE'S SEVEN UPS
CAGE AND THE DOKS GET THEIR GROOVE ON!


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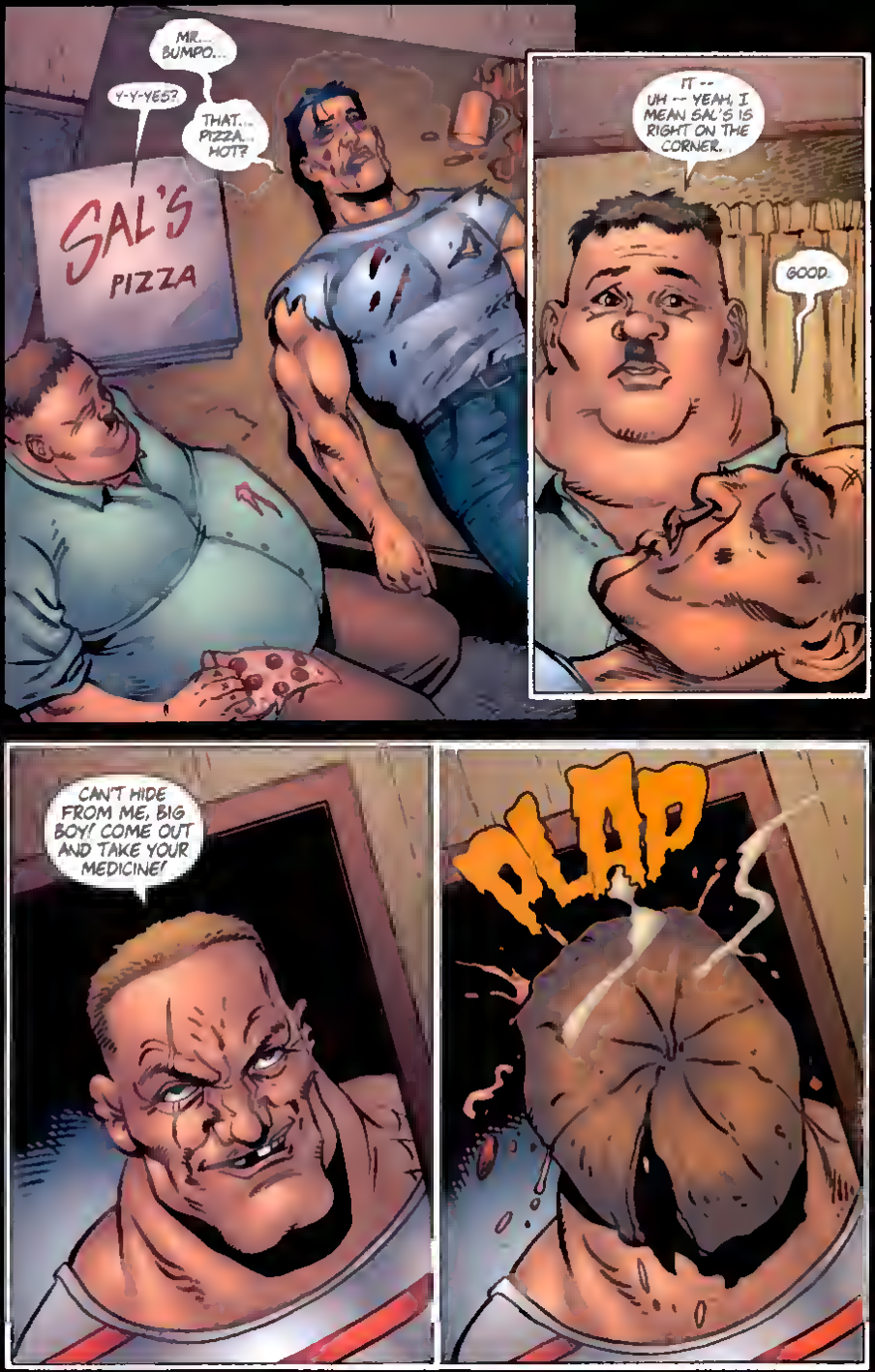
Any Which Way You Can

GARTH ENNIS STORY **STEVE DILLON** PENCILS **JIMMY PALMIOTTI** INKS
CHRIS SOTOMAYOR COLORS **RICHARD STARKINGS & COMICRAFT'S WES ABBOTT** LETTERS
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UNNH!
MR. SMITH, DUDE --!
WHAT'RE YOU -- STILL DOING HERE --
W-WE HEARD THE NOISE, BUT WE THOUGHT IT WAS YOU LIKE PUNISHING SOMEONE--
WE DIDN'T KNOW YOU WERE THE ONE GETTING --
GO, YOU IDIOTS --
AH! THESE ARE YOUR LITTLE FRIENDS, YES?
WHEN THE RUSSIAN GETS THROUGH WITH YOU, IMAGINE THE TERRIBLE THINGS THAT WILL HAPPEN TO THEM!


HA HA HA HA HA HA!
GO! GO NOW!
BUT --
GO, DAMN YOU!
WHAMM
AAAAH HA HA HA HA HA!
MR. SMITH?!
PIZZA
PIZZA
PIZZA
PIZZA


MR... BUMPO...
Y-Y-YES?
THAT... PIZZA... HOT?
SAL'S PIZZA
IT -- UH -- YEAH, I MEAN SAL'S IS RIGHT ON THE CORNER..
GOOD.
CAN'T HIDE FROM ME, BIG BOY! COME OUT AND TAKE YOUR MEDICINE!
PLAP

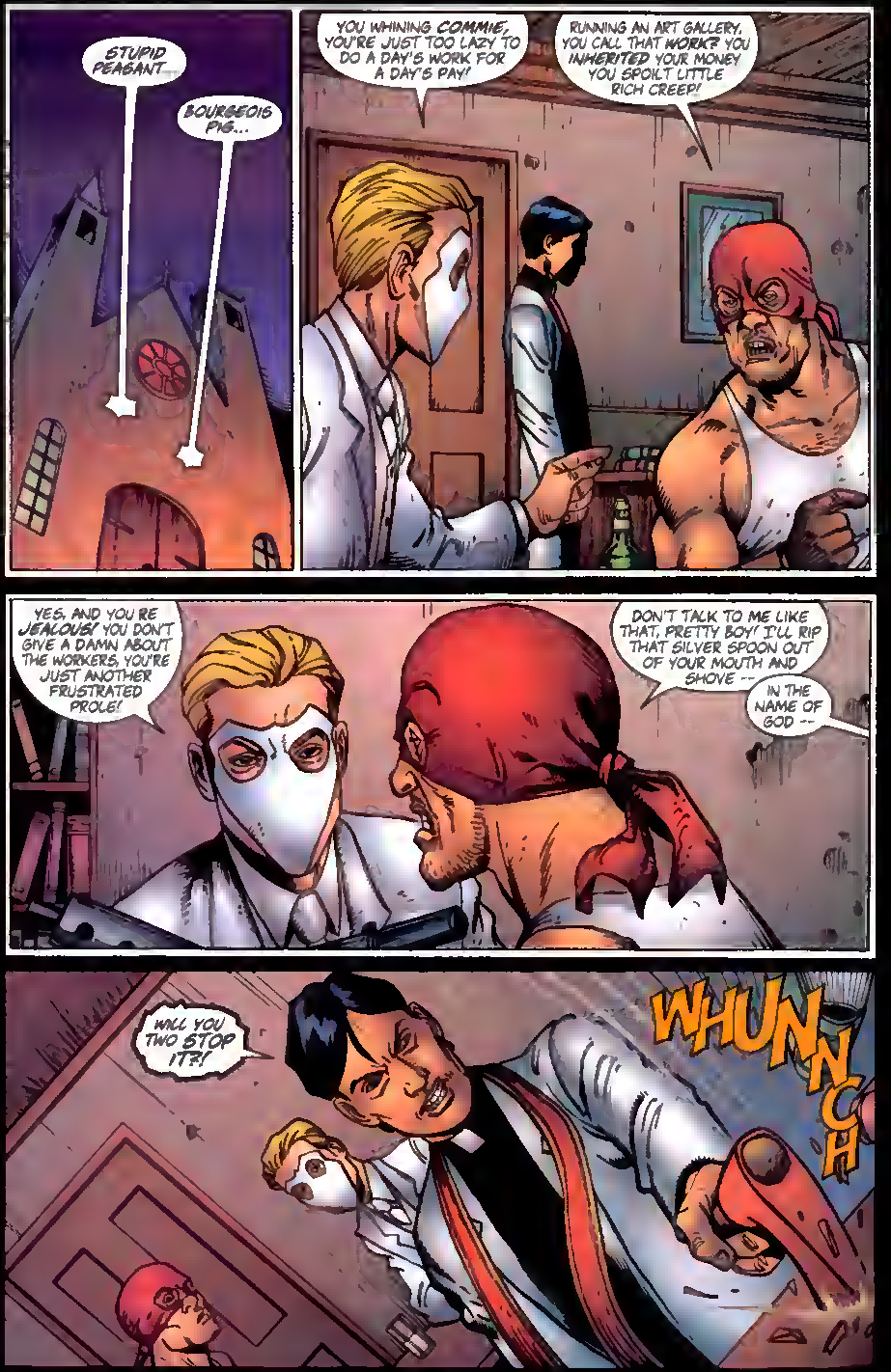

AAAAH! NO! BURNING! HURRRTTS!
SENSITIVE SKIN
MY HEART BLEEDS
UHN?
WAAAAGGH!
UUUGGH, HORRIBLE! LIKE THING IN ALIEN!
FOR THIS THE RUSSIAN TAKES KID GLOVES OFF, BIG BOY!
SHUT IT, IVAN.
WELCOME TO NEW YORK CITY.


NNNOOOOO!
FALUMMPP
GUMF
MNNNMM! MNNNMM!
M-M-MR. SMITH --?
JUST HANG ON, MR. BUMPO.
ALL BE OVER SOON.
HHNNNNNHHHHH!




HOW LONG HAS IT BEEN, MR. BUMPO?
ABOUT TWENTY MINUTES, MR. SMITH.
WE'LL GIVE IT ANOTHER TEN.
OKEYDOKEY.

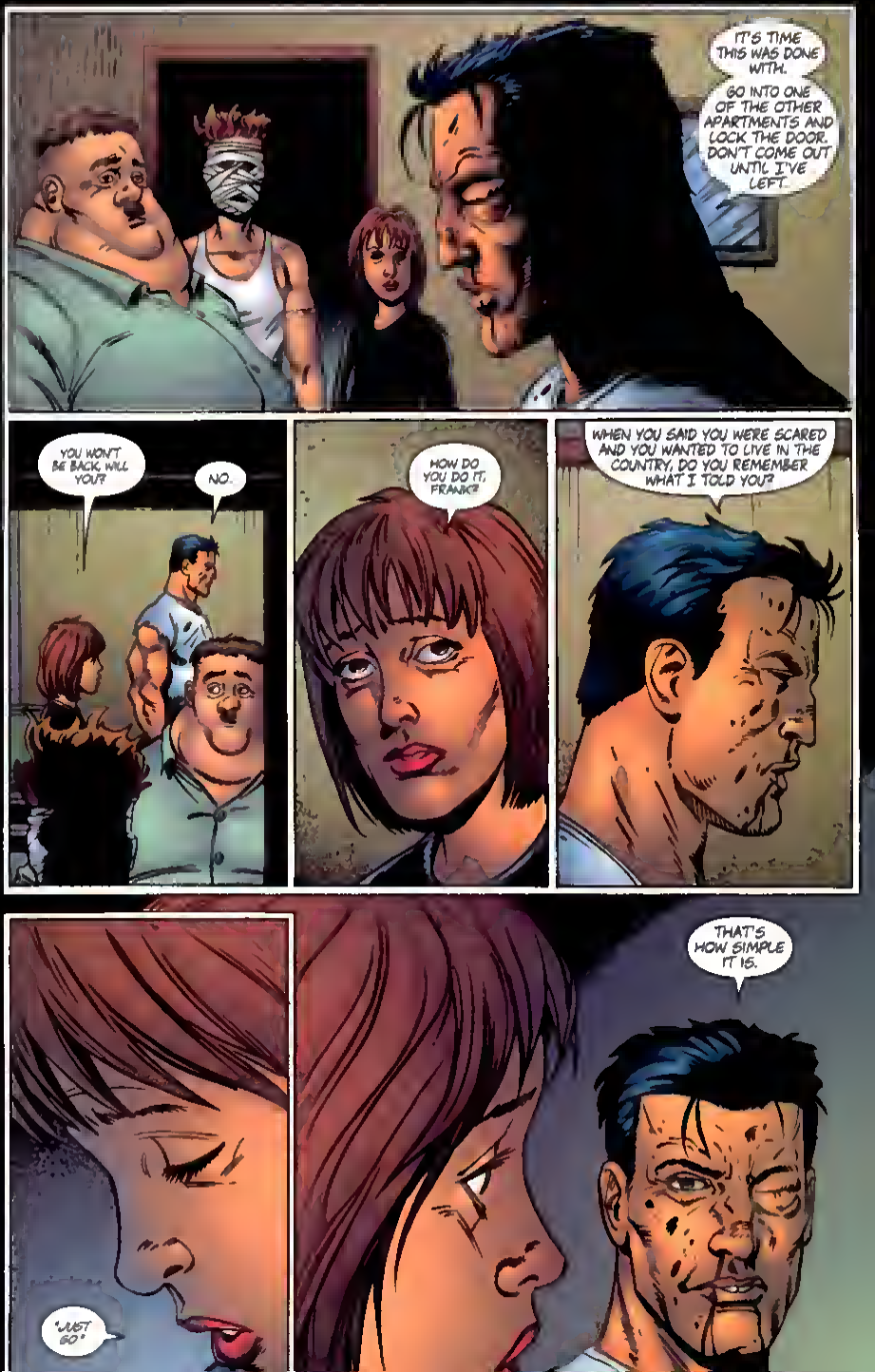



STUPID PEASANT...
BOURGEOIS PIG...
YOU WHINING COMMIE, YOU'RE JUST TOO LAZY TO DO A DAY'S WORK FOR A DAY'S PAY!
RUNNING AN ART GALLERY, YOU CALL THAT WORK? YOU INHERITED YOUR MONEY YOU SPOILT LITTLE RICH CREEP!
YES, AND YOU'RE JEALOUS! YOU DON'T GIVE A DAMN ABOUT THE WORKERS, YOU'RE JUST ANOTHER FRUSTRATED PROLE!
DON'T TALK TO ME LIKE THAT, PRETTY BOY! I'LL RIP THAT SILVER SPOON OUT OF YOUR MOUTH AND SHOVE --
IN THE NAME OF GOD --
WILL YOU TWO STOP IT?!
WHUNNNCH

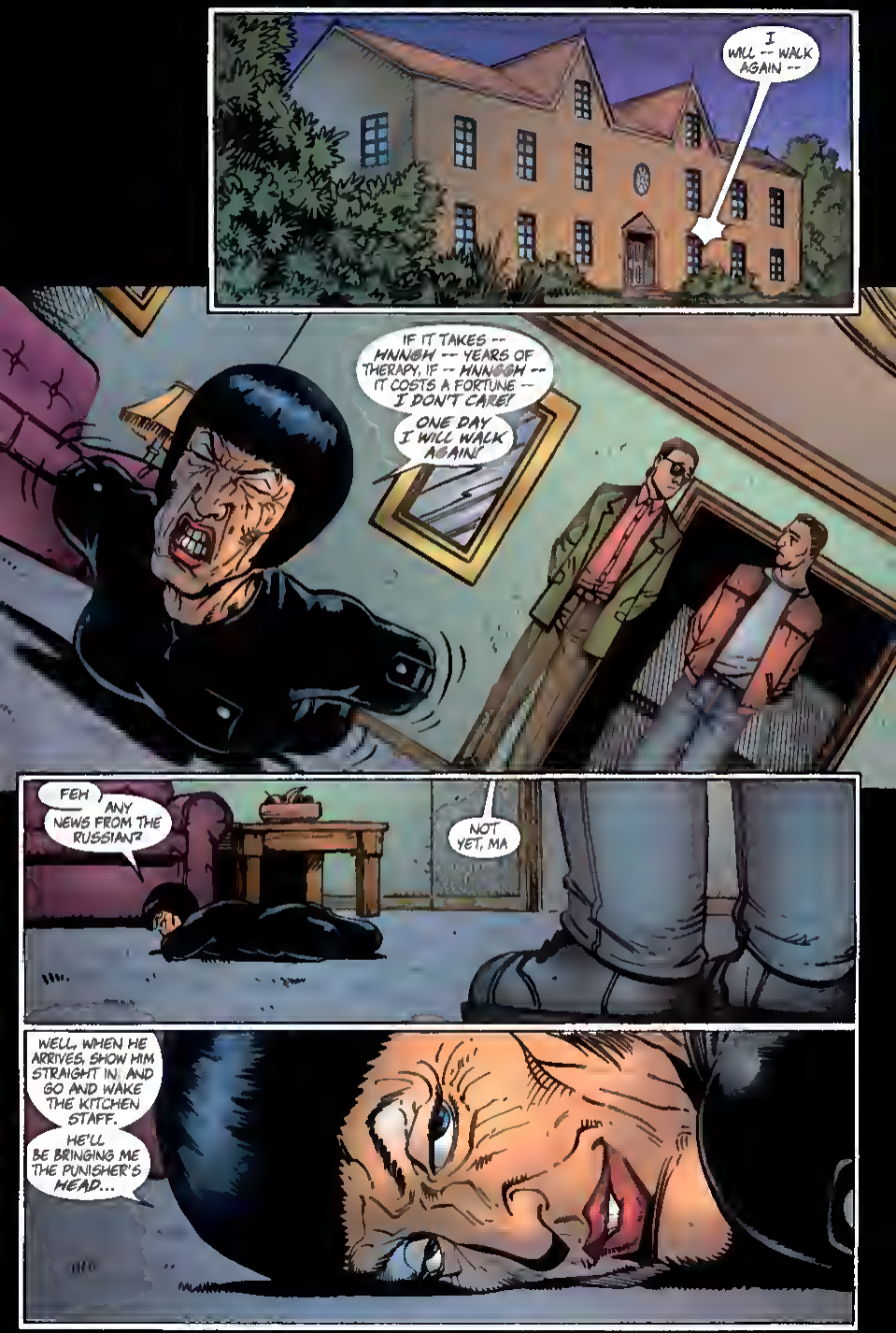

ELITE. MR. PAYBACK.
I THOUGHT THE WHOLE POINT OF THIS DISCUSSION WAS TO DECIDE WHERE TO STRIKE FIRST. WHERE TO BEGIN OUR VIGILANTE CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE CRIMINALS OF THIS CITY.
THAT WAS BEFORE FAUNTLEROY HERE STARTED TALKING ABOUT CURFEWS IN ETHNIC NEIGHBORHOODS! THE MAN'S AN OBVIOUS FASCIST!
THIS MANIAC WANTS TO TARGET BANKS! I MEAN CALL ME NAIVE BUT HOW DOES SHOOTING MY BANK MANAGER STOP THE FLOW OF HEROIN INTO MANHATTAN?
I AM THE HOLY AND I SAY ENOUGH!
YOU TWO IDIOTS HAD BETTER START SHAPING UP BEFORE THE WRATH OF GOD DESCENDS! I'M NOT KIDDING! WE'VE GOT TO GET THIS TOGETHER!
BECAUSE RIGHT NOW, IF WE ASK THE PUNISHER TO JOIN THIS LITTLE BAND THEN OUR PARTICULAR BATTLE FOR JUSTICE WILL BE OVER BEFORE IT'S BEGUN!

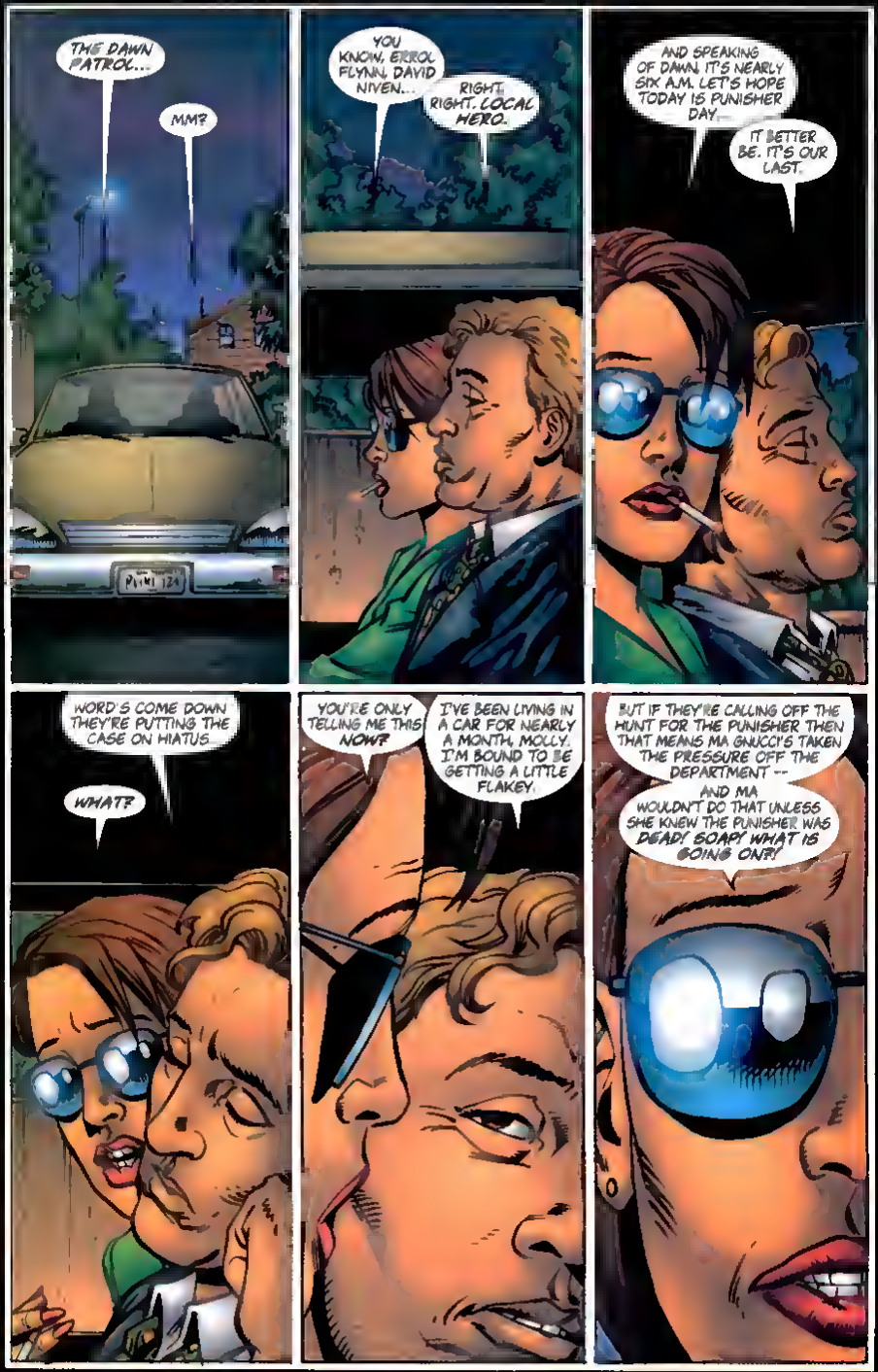

UM... HELLO?
YOU OKAY, MR. BUMPO?
FINE, MR. SMITH. JUST... A BIT CONFUSED, REALLY...
MR. SMITH, YOU -- YOU BEAT THIS GUY?

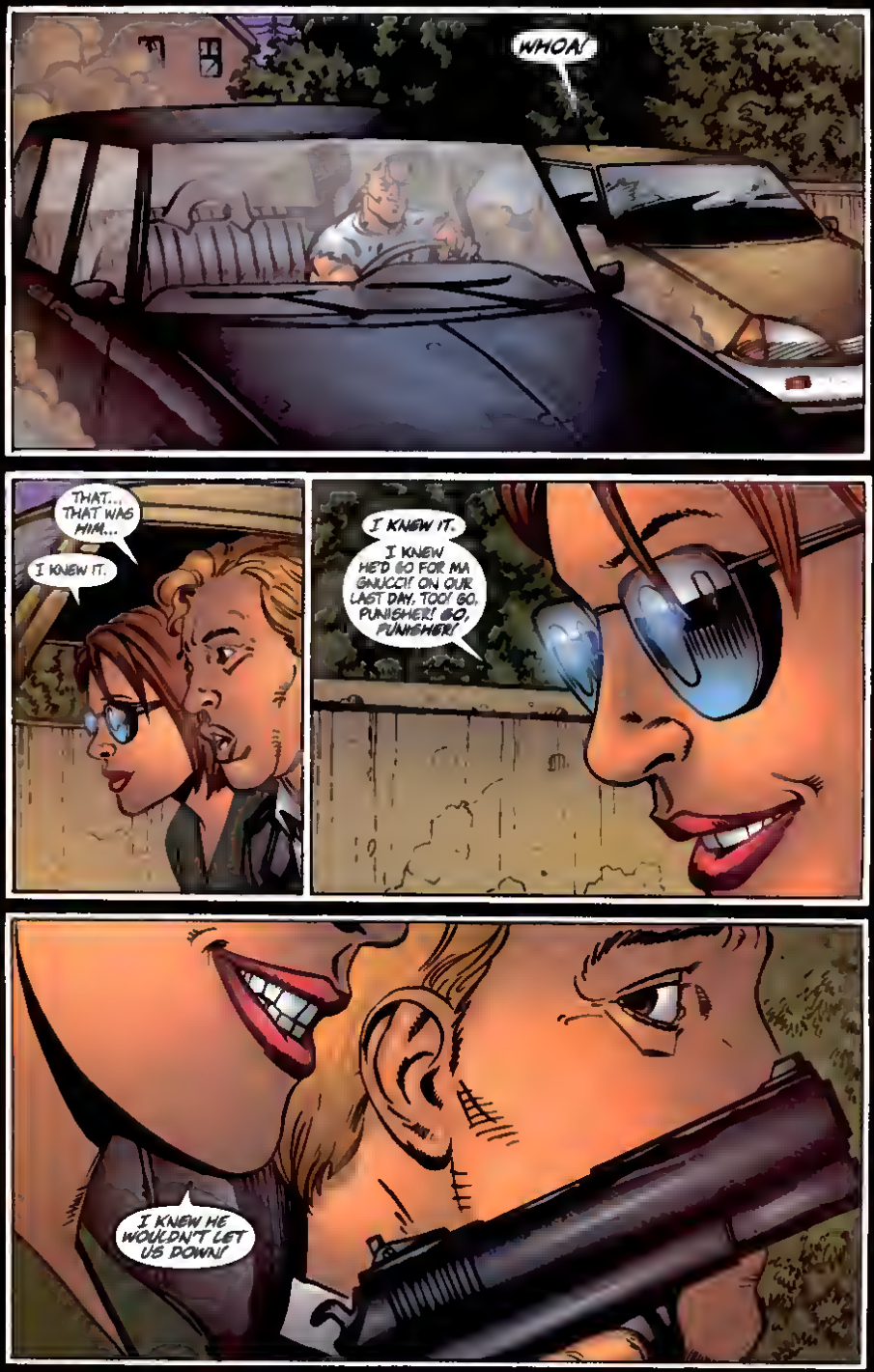

HE GOT ME MAD.

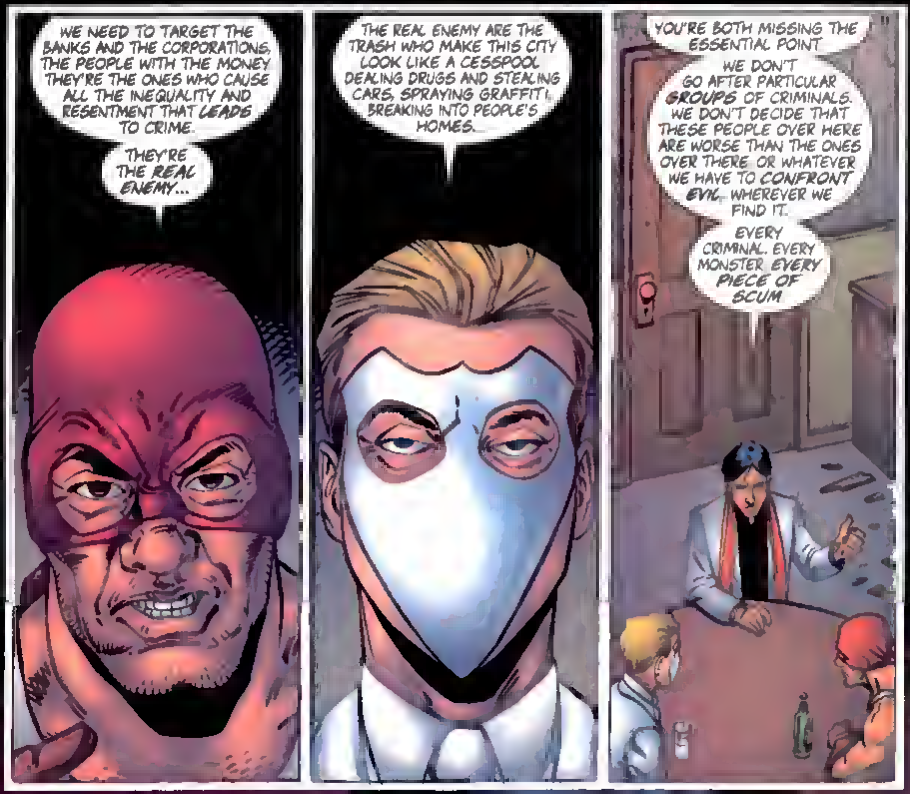

IT'S TIME THIS WAS DONE WITH.
GO INTO ONE OF THE OTHER APARTMENTS AND LOCK THE DOOR. DON'T COME OUT UNTIL I'VE LEFT.
YOU WON'T BE BACK, WILL YOU?
NO.
HOW DO YOU DO IT, FRANK?
WHEN YOU SAID YOU WERE SCARED AND YOU WANTED TO LIVE IN THE COUNTRY, DO YOU REMEMBER WHAT I TOLD YOU?
THAT'S HOW SIMPLE IT IS.
'JUST GO.'


RUSSIAN'S SURE TAKIN' HIS TIME -- CHOMPF --
OH WELL -- CHOMPF --
KRESSH
THE BRIDGES OF MADISON COUNTY

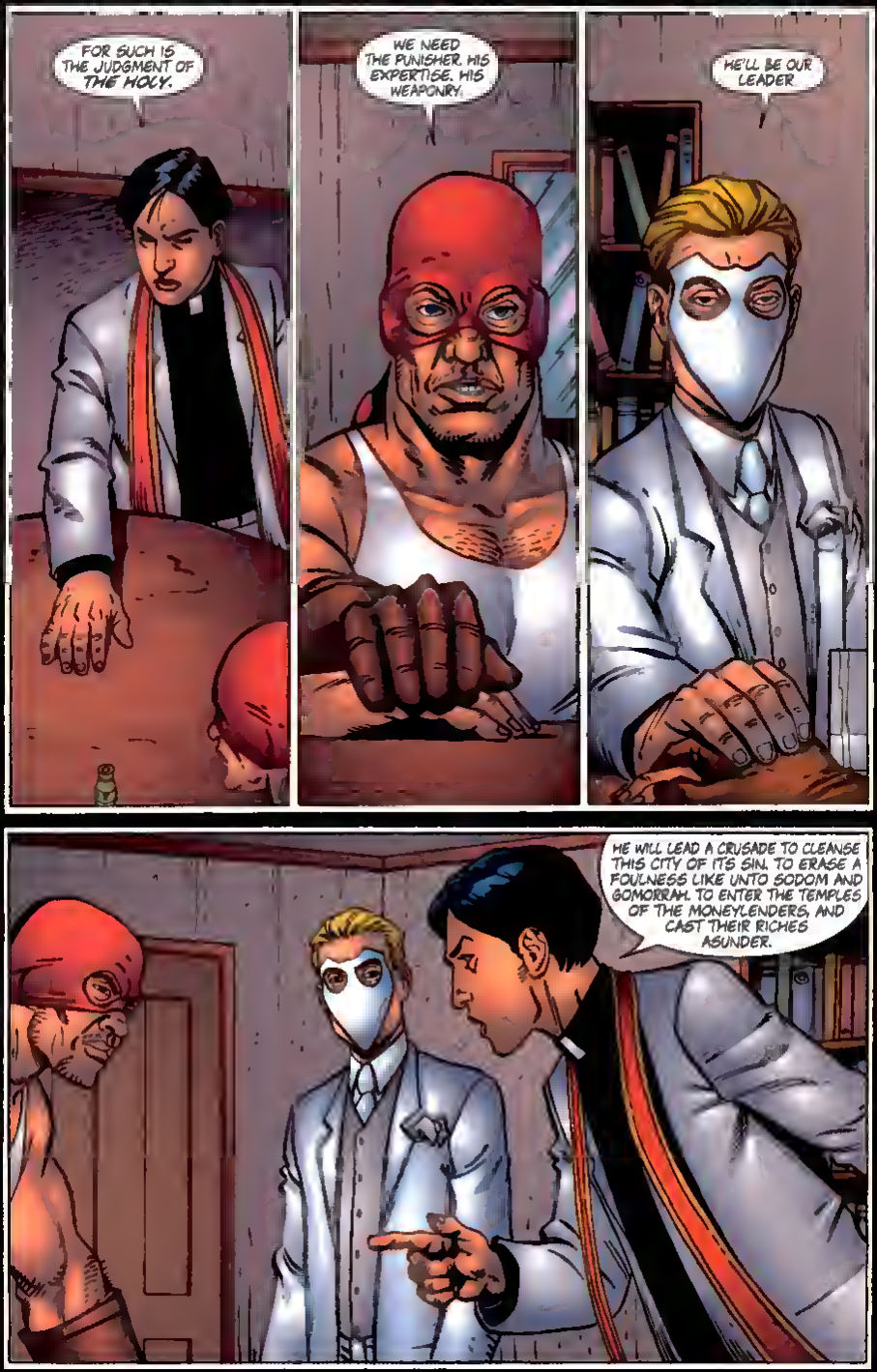

I WILL -- WALK AGAIN --
IF IT TAKES -- HNNGH -- YEARS OF THERAPY, IF -- HNNGH -- IT COSTS A FORTUNE -- I DON'T CARE!
ONE DAY I WILL WALK AGAIN!
FEH
ANY NEWS FROM THE RUSSIAN?
NOT YET, MA
WELL, WHEN HE ARRIVES, SHOW HIM STRAIGHT IN. AND GO AND WAKE THE KITCHEN STAFF.
HE'LL BE BRINGING ME THE PUNISHER'S HEAD...


THE DAWN PATROL...
MM?
YOU KNOW, ERROL FLYNN, DAVID NIVEN...
RIGHT, RIGHT. LOCAL HERO.
AND SPEAKING OF DAWN, IT'S NEARLY SIX A.M. LET'S HOPE TODAY IS PUNISHER DAY...
IT BETTER BE. IT'S OUR LAST.
WORD'S COME DOWN THEY'RE PUTTING THE CASE ON HIATUS.
WHAT?
YOU'RE ONLY TELLING ME THIS NOW?
I'VE BEEN LIVING IN A CAR FOR NEARLY A MONTH, MOLLY. I'M BOUND TO BE GETTING A LITTLE FLAKEY.
BUT IF THEY'RE CALLING OFF THE HUNT FOR THE PUNISHER THEN THAT MEANS MA GNUCCI'S TAKEN THE PRESSURE OFF THE DEPARTMENT --
AND MA WOULDN'T DO THAT UNLESS SHE KNEW THE PUNISHER WAS DEAD! SOAP! WHAT IS GOING ON?!


WHOA!
THAT... THAT WAS HIM...
I KNEW IT.
I KNEW IT.
I KNEW HE'D GO FOR MA GNUCCI! ON OUR LAST DAY, TOO! GO, PUNISHER! GO, PUNISHER!
I KNEW HE WOULDN'T LET US DOWN!


WE NEED TO TARGET THE BANKS AND THE CORPORATIONS. THE PEOPLE WITH THE MONEY. THEY'RE THE ONES WHO CAUSE ALL THE INEQUALITY AND RESENTMENT THAT LEADS TO CRIME.
THEY'RE THE REAL ENEMY...
THE REAL ENEMY ARE THE TRASH WHO MAKE THIS CITY LOOK LIKE A CESSPOOL. DEALING DRUGS AND STEALING CARS, SPRAYING GRAFFITI, BREAKING INTO PEOPLE'S HOMES...
YOU'RE BOTH MISSING THE ESSENTIAL POINT.
WE DON'T GO AFTER PARTICULAR GROUPS OF CRIMINALS. WE DON'T DECIDE THAT THESE PEOPLE OVER HERE ARE WORSE THAN THE ONES OVER THERE. OR WHATEVER. WE HAVE TO CONFRONT EVIL... WHEREVER WE FIND IT.
EVERY CRIMINAL. EVERY MONSTER. EVERY PIECE OF SCUM


WE HAVE TO GO OUT AND KILL THEM ALL.

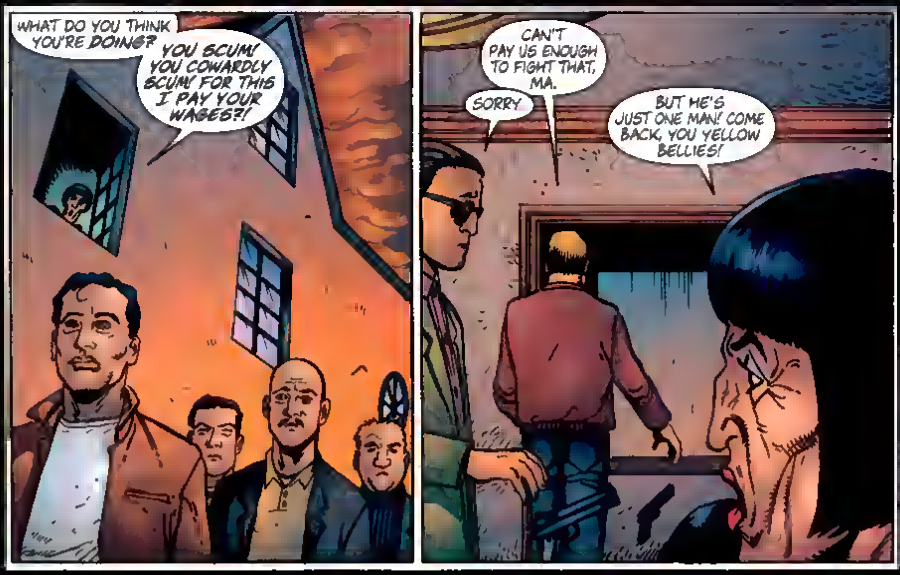

FOR SUCH IS THE JUDGMENT OF THE HOLY.
WE NEED THE PUNISHER. HIS EXPERTISE. HIS WEAPONRY.
HE'LL BE OUR LEADER
HE WILL LEAD A CRUSADE TO CLEANSE THIS CITY OF ITS SIN. TO ERASE A FOULNESS LIKE UNTO SODOM AND GOMORRAH. TO ENTER THE TEMPLES OF THE MONEYLENDERS, AND CAST THEIR RICHES ASUNDER.


HE WILL LEAD THE VIGILANTE SQUAD.


WELL CALL ME THE INSTANT YOU HEAR FROM HIM, UNDERSTAND? HE SHOULD'VE FINISHED THE PUNISHER HOURS AGO!
OH MY GOD.
NO...!
MA, YOU NEED TO SEE THIS!
WELL LIFT ME OVER THERE CRETIN!
CAREFUL, MORON! WHAT'S ALL THE FUSS ABOUT, ANYWAY?
MA GNUCCI!
MA GNUCCI!


IS THIS ALL YOU'VE GOT?!!


KLAK
KLOK
KLAK KLOK
KLAK
KLANK


WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING?
YOU SCUM! YOU COWARDLY SCUM! FOR THIS I PAY YOUR WAGES?!
CAN'T PAY US ENOUGH TO FIGHT THAT, MA.
SORRY
BUT HE'S JUST ONE MAN! COME BACK, YOU YELLOW BELLIES!


I WILL NOT ACCEPT THIS! NO! NO! NO!
NOOOO!
YES.
TO BE CONCLUDED


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AGENT RED. AGENT ORANGE. AGENT GREEN.
TARGET TIMES SQUARE.
GO FOR QUANTUM FAX.
YOU HAVE ONE HOUR. CURRENT DISINFORMATION OPTION: SARIN GAS ATTACK IN THE SUBWAY.
ORDERS FROM ON HIGH. YOU ARE TO ASSIST PRIORITY MIDAS IN ANY WAY. A PARATERRESTRIAL ENTITY MAY BE INVOLVED.
THIS IS RED.
TOUCHDOWN GEOFF. FAX SUCCESSFUL.
AND RED TO S.H.I.E.L.D. OVERMIND: STOP THINKING ABOUT MY WIFE NUDE, GEOFF.
SO WHO'S PRIORITY MIDAS THAT HE CAN SHUT DOWN THE NEW YORK SUBWAY WHENEVER HE
I AM MIDAS
DO YOU BELIEVE EVIL EXISTS?
EVIL FROM BEYOND THE STARS LIVES BELOW US. IN HUMAN FORM.
AND IT HAS MY DAUGHTER.


marvel
boy
ZERO ZERO: YEAR OF LOVE
GRANT MORRISON WROTE IT
J.G.JONES DREW IT
SEAN PARSONS INKED IT
AVALON STUDIOS & MATT MILLA COLORED IT
AS & COMICRAFT'S WES ABBOTT LETTERED IT
KELLY LAMY ASSISTED IT
NANCI DAKESIAN EDITED IT
JOE QUESADA READ IT
SOUNDTRACK GOLDFRAPP


RECONSTRUC COMPLET
BACK NOW
..YOU.
YOU'RE SICK IN THE BRAIN.
I DON'T CARE HOW GOOD I FEEL NOW, YOU TRIED TO KILL ME
I, WHAT?
YOU TRIED TO KILL ME.
I WAS THE ONE WHO JUST SAVED YOUR LIFE.
YOU TRIED TO KILL ME FIRST.
THIS CONVERSATION IS MEANINGLESS YOU SHOULDN'T BE HERE
I SHOULDN'T BE HERE? IT'S MY PLANET! I LIVE HERE!
YOU BLOW UP HALF OF MANHATTAN TO SWEAR AT HUMANITY IN LETTERS FIVE BLOCKS HIGH AND YOU EXPECT US TO APPLAUD?


SO? YOU'RE HERE TO DESTROY OUR CORRUPT SYSTEM, IS THAT IT?
SYSTEM?
THERE IS NO SYSTEM HERE. THERE'S NOTHING BUT FEAR AND GREED AND STUPIDITY
AS FAR AS I CAN SEE THE PLANET IS RUN BY PRIMITIVE PRIMEURBAN PROTECTION RACKETS WITH SOMETHING CALLED "LAW" AS THE ONLY THING DIVIDING ONE GANG'S METHODS FROM ANOTHER
YOUR LEADERS ARE MURDERERS WHO SAY VIOLENCE IS WRONG. THEN DROP BOMBS WHENEVER THEY HAVE A POINT TO MAKE
MILLIONS OF YOUR PEOPLE CAN'T EVEN GET SHELTER OR ENOUGH TO EAT
I CAN GO ON AND ON IF YOU LIKE
THIS WHOLE UGLY PLANET SUCKS, AS BAD AS BEING JAILED IN PREHISTORY WHEN EVERYONE WAS CRAZY
PLEX UP.
KEEP OUT OF IT, PLEX.
I'M MAKING A DECISION.
YOU TOOK TOO LONG.
CAN WE PLEASE REMIND FROM HERE BEFORE SOMEONE DIE NEEDLESSLY


'OUBLIETTE: NOUN: A DUNGEON, THE ONLY ENTRANCE TO WHICH IS THROUGH THE TOP.'
THAT'S YOUR NAME?
YOU DID LEARN ENGLISH STRAIGHT FROM THE DICTIONARY.
WHAT'S THE BIG GREEN HEAD ALL ABOUT? HE'S THE BRAINS AND YOU'RE THE SWIMSUIT?
US-PLEX SUPREM INTELLIGENCE SYS STANDARD ON E DIPLOMA VESSEL.
THE PLEX A PROGRAMMABLE PIEZOPLASM HOUSING T ACCUMULATED WISDOM OF THE ENTIRE KREE RA ACCESSED VIA MUL PERSONALITY COMP INTERFAC
THE PLEX HOME GUARD IS CURRENTLY DOMINAN AND WE'D LIKE TO SUGGEST YOU P THE WEAPON AWAY
TO THE PROBABLE SURVIVAL OF THE KREE ENCORE WE CAN KILL YOU WITH A WINK.
YOU THINK.
WHAT MAKES YOU SPACE MONSTERS SO HOSTILE ANYWAY?
GOOD QUESTION.
LET ME SHOW YOU SOMETHING.


AND THIS STRUCTURE IS PART OF THE CREATURE'S VEHICLE, FUSED IN SOME WAY WITH THE SURROUNDING MATERIAL...
WE'RE VERY CLOSE.
MY SECURITY CLEARANCE ISN'T HIGH ENOUGH TO PERMIT ENTRANCE TO YOUR THOUGHTS DOCTOR MIDAS. BUT...
THIS MONSTROSITY YOU'VE ASKED US TO MENTALLY CONTROL...
TO MUZZLE WHEN UNLEASH, YES
I SAY SPECIALISTS SENSITIVES LIKE YOURSELVES WHO CAN RIP LITTLE HOLES INTO THE HEREAFTER, AGENT RED.
MY DREAM IS TO PLUNDER THE RADIANT TREASURE HOUSES OF HEAVEN ITSELF ONE DAY.
SOMETIMES, HOWEVER WE FIND NOT ANGELS OUT THERE ON THE TATTERS OF CREATION BUT HORRORS LIKE MY UN-ENTITY WRIGGLING ON OUR HOOKS.
THE THING HAS NO MIND TO WORK WITH!
WE'VE BEEN THROUGH THIS WITH TWO FORMER PRESIDENTS OF THE USA...
EXCUSE ME, S.H.I.E.L.D. AGENT RED.
THIS WILL SAVE A MILE OR TWO OF DIRTY TUNNELS.
VRPP
STAK
OWW!


...NICE, THAT, OR SO YOU MIGHT SAY. BUT HELICOPTERA ROTORS ARE RAZOR SHARP AND MADE FOR PRUNING FINGERS OFF IF THEY COME TOO CLOSE
THEY'RE GREAT
IF I HAD AN ARMY OF THESE LITTLE GROTESQUES UNDER MY CONTROL, I COULD VIVISECT THE ENTIRE ANIMAL POPULATION OF CHICAGO IN ONE BLOOD-SOAKED INSTANT
I'M ONLY JOKING
WHERE ARE YOU TAKING ME?
YOU ASKED ME A QUESTION
THIS IS THE ANSWER
WHAT IS THIS? YOUR GRIBLY LAIRDER?
MY DAD SAYS YOU'RE AN ALIEN SERIAL KILLER INSECT
FLEX. OPEN SHIP'S MEMORY


NO I'M A MEMBER OF THE 15TH KREE DIPLOMATIC GESTALT, GENOME-BOOSTED WITH INSECT TRAITS.
THIS IS WHAT THEY WERE LIKE.
THE YEAR AFTER I JOINED THE HEROES OF THE DIMENSION-SCHOONER "MARVEL", WE NEGOTIATED THE KREE/SKRULL CEASEFIRE AND ENDED MILLENNIA OF COSMIC HOSTILITY
ON OUR WAY HOME TO HALA, WE ANSWERED SIMULTANEOUS DISTRESS CALLS FROM FIVE DOOMED CIVILIZATIONS
THERE WERE ONLY THREE ASTRO-GODS FROM THE FIRST FIRMAMENT, BUT THE IMMENSE SINK-SUITS THEY WEAR TO HELP THEM EXPLORE THE HYPOVERSES ARE POWERED BY GRAVITY REFRACTION AND EPIC GENOCIDE
BILLIONS DIED THE SCAFFOLDING OF SPACETIME FARTED AND COLLAPSED


WE ENTERED MACROSPACE
SPLINTERED ACROSS THE ENDLESS, INFINITE WORLDS OF THE SUPERSPECTRUM: THE IMMENSE RAINBOW OF REALITIES WHERE EVERYTHING YOU EVER IMAGINED IS JUST AS REAL AS EVERYTHING ELSE AND ALL AT ONCE
BIG DEAL.
THEN WHAT?
THEN AFTER ALL THOSE YEARS WE THOUGHT WE'D FOUND OUR WAY HOME
BUT WE'D FOUND OUR WAY HERE BY MISTAKE
AND YOUR DAD HAPPENED

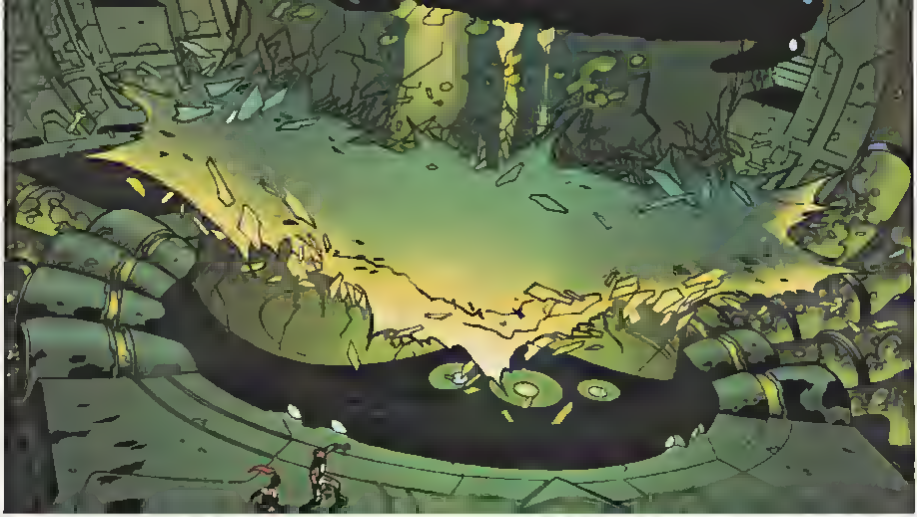

THAT WAS MERREE. WE WERE IN LOVE, BUT IT'S HARD TO LOVE A CARBONIZED IRRADIATED SKELETAL STRUCTURE
DOES ANY OF THIS HELP EXPLAIN MY HOSTILITY?
WHY? THAT'S WHAT HAS ME WONDERING NIGHTLY WHY DO THIS TO US?
BECAUSE MY DAD WANTS TO BATHE IN COSMIC RAYS UNTIL THEY MUTATE HIM INTO A FREAK LIKE THE FANTASTIC FOUR.
AND YOUR COSMIC RAY ENGINE IS A PURE SOURCE
YOU'RE JUST ANOTHER OPPORTUNITY FOR HIM. WE ALL ARE.
MY MOM FOR INSTANCE. HE SLOWLY CONVERTED HER ENTIRE BODY INTO A CHEMICAL HOTHOUSE OF INFORMATION-RICH TOXINS DESIGNED TO ARTIFICIALLY ACCELERATE MY DEVELOPMENT
I WAS BORN CURSING IN EIGHT LANGUAGES
AND THE FIRST THING I REMEMBER IS HIS BIG IRON HAND WHEN HE TORE HER WOMB OPEN TO RESCUE ME FROM THE POISON EDEN I'D FINALLY OUTGROWN
I WISH I HADN'T SEEN SO INTIMATELY INVOLVED IN MOM'S HIDEOUS DEATH, BUT I LEARNED FAST EVERYONE DIES IN SOME TWISTED WAY OR ANOTHER
YOUR GIRLFRIEND LOOKS PRETTY IN THIS LIGHT


WHAT WAS HER FAVORITE COLOR?
MINE IS FUCHSIA UNDER ULTRAVIOLET, LIKE MY LIPSTICK
HE HAD ME RAISED IN A GREENHOUSE; OXYGEN-RICH ATMOSPHERE TO PROMOTE RAPID BRAIN GROWTH AND LONGEVITY
AND HE TRAINED ME TO KILL. EVERYTHING THAT EVER TRIED TO LIVE. I'VE HUNTED VAMPIRES, SPACE MONSTERS, GREEK GODS.
I'M THE LARA CROFT OF EVIL. I ADMIT IT
BUT I NEED YOU TO TRUST ME
OKAY.
THEN SHOW ME YOUR FACE
NO. I... I TOLD YOU... MY DAD SCARRED ME
I DON'T WANT...

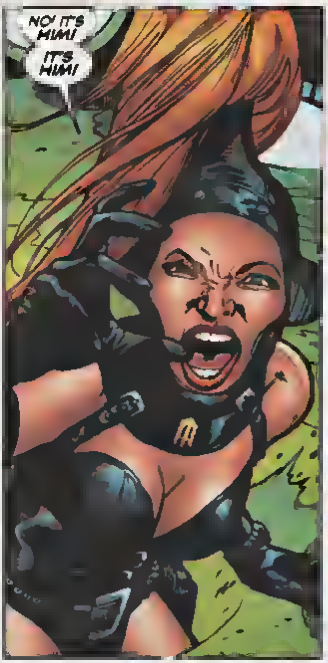

I HAVE A STRONG STOMACH. YOU WANT ME TO TRUST YOU?
YOU.
SHOOP
HIM.
WHAT'S SO FUNNY?
HE LIED TO ME.
FLUP


HE TOLD ME I WAS UGLY AND DEFORMED ALL MY LIFE HE TOLD ME NOBODY WAS TO LOOK.
MY DAD IS SICK.
IT'S WORSE THAN I THOUGHT IT'S EVEN WORSE.
YOUR FATHER NAMED YOU AFTER AN INSTRUMENT OF *TORTURE*; ASK YOURSELF HOW NORMAL THAT SEEMS.
FORGET HIM.
TEN MILLION PARALLEL WORLDS FROM HOME! *NO* FRIENDS! WHAT DO *YOU* KNOW?
YOU THINK YOU CAN JUST CHANGE IT ALL OVERNIGHT BY BLOWING THINGS UP? PEOPLE LIKE MY DAD *OWN THE WORLD*.
THEY'LL HUNT YOU DOWN!
THE SHIP'S IMPREGNABLE. I'M UNBEATABLE. WHAT CAN THEY DO?
I'M NOT JUST BLOWING THINGS UP.
I'M CLEARING IT ALL AWAY TO START SOMETHING NEW AND BETTER.
MAYBE YOU'RE RIGHT; MAYBE I'LL NEVER GET HOME.
WHATEVER HAPPENS I CAN MAKE MYSELF *COMFORTABLE*.
BY TURNING *EARTH* INTO *HALA*.
TERRAFORMING US?
I'LL SHOW YOU PEOPLE WHAT *PARADISE* LOOKS LIKE IF I HAVE TO LEVEL EVERY CITY ON EARTH AND REBUILD IT STONE BY STONE.


SKRULL CHIMERA SIGNAL HAS BEEN USING EPS IN OMNIVAU MODULATION T BROADCAST LOCATI
FLEX INTER-KILLER WAVELENGTHS AR LOSING IN ON TH CHIMERA BUT IT TOO LATE
INCREDIBLE. AN ALIEN ARK, EMBEDDED IN THE CITY'S GUTS LIKE SOME SICKENING APEWORM.
THE LIGHT FROM THE UN-ENTITY'S EYE DISINTEGRATES ALL MATTER AGENT RED, STAND WELL BACK AND AIM THE CREATURE AT THE HULL.
MON VARR. THE SKRULL ADAPTO-CIRCUIT IS HER MASK. CAPABI MUTATION TO TION
YOU BROUGHT HIM HERE.
YOU SAID I COULD TRUST YOU.
NO. LISTEN TO ME. I DIDN'T DO THIS. MY DAD SWITCHED MY MASK. HE MUST HAVE LACED IT WITH STUFF HE STOLE FROM YOUR SHIP WHEN IT WAS DOWNED AT GROVER'S MILL. ISN'T IT OBVIOUS HOW HE'S USING ME TOO?
YOU HAVE TO TRUST ME. I SAVED YOU.
HUMANS ARE ALL THE SAME. NO CONSCIENCE...
I ONLY SAID ALL THAT TO SEEM SCARY.
I CAN HELP YOU CHANGE THE WORLD. I HAVE TO CHANGE THIS WORLD.
I CAN'T LIVE IN THIS ONE ANYMORE.




PLEX!
OH NO NO NO NO


NO! IT'S HIM!
IT'S HIM!


MY DAD IS HERE! OUT!
MOVE!


THE TARGET'S AN ALIEN INSECT IN HUMAN FORM. ONE SHOT'S ALL YOU GOT BEFORE HE GETS HUNGRY
FIRE AT WILL!


THE PSYCHICS ARE HEMORRHAGING FROM EVERY ORIFICE BUT OUR UN-ENTITY WAS WORTH ITS WEIGHT IN DIAMONDS
BURN THAT HORROR ON THE FLOOR
DOCTOR MIDAS! DOWN HERE!
THIS IS IT, SIR. AFTER ALL THE ATTEMPTS WE FINALLY GOT OUR HANDS ON A COSMIC RAY ENGINE CHAMBER.
ISN'T IT BEAUTIFUL?
LIKE THE HEART OF GOD, SAUTEED AND SERVED WITH FINE WINE!


THERE! SEE? RAW COSMIC MACROPARTICLES ENERGY TO MUTATE AND TRANSFORM BEYOND ALL KNOWN LIMITS TO SHATTER THIS MORTAL BODY AND MAKE ME UNCONQUERABLE...
OPEN IT!
DOCTOR MIDAS HERE.
THE TEAM WE SENT OUT TO LOOK FOR YOUR DAUGHTER FOUND THIS.
HER FACE...
NAKED WITHOUT HER FACE
I AM NOT NAKED
I'M RIGHT HERE, DAD AND I DON'T NEED A ******* MASK BECAUSE I LOOK PERFECTLY NORMAL EXCEPT FOR THE INCH LONG DUELING SCHMIES YOU GAVE ME WHEN I WAS EIGHT!
WHAT?
HAVE YOU NO SHAME
HIDE YOURSELF!
OUBLIETTE WHATEVER HE'S DONE TO MAKE YOU HATE ME... I FORGIVE YOU.
DON'T MAKE ME PUNISH YOU.
DELAY THE UNCONVINCING THREATS, YOU SCUMMY OLD FLY-MAGNET
SHE'S WITH ME NOW SHE LOVES IT AND SO DO I
I'M COMING TO CUT OUT YOUR BRAIN AND USE YOUR SKULL AS A FLASHY URINAL, YOU HEAR ME?
I'M COMING TO GET YOU!
DOCTOR MIDAS
WE'VE OPENED THE PRIMARY LOCKING FIELDS. THE COSMIC ENGINE SHIELDS ARE FALLING.


DOCTOR MIDAS...?
RELEASE THE UN-ENTITY.
DESTROY THEM BOTH.
DESTROY EVERYTHING.
I GO NOW TO MY REBIRTH.
THE TOAST IS: ANNIHILATION.


YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE SAID ALL THAT. HE'LL THINK WE'VE BEEN DOING SOMETHING SEXUAL. HE WON'T BELIEVE WE'VE HONESTLY BEEN TRYING TO KILL ONE ANOTHER
WHAT'S THE BEST WAY OUT OF HERE?
UP THE WAY. BUT I HAVE TO GO BACK FOR FLEX. IF...
WHAT'S THAT NOISE?
THERE! CAN YOU HEAR?
FOOTSTEPS. BUT THEY'D HAVE TO BE COMING THROUGH... SOLID ROCK
NOH-VARR. SAY SOMETHING TO ME IN KREE. IN CASE WE DIE.
SOMETHING SEXY
RRRM
WHAT WAS THAT?
THIS AREA IS NO LONGER INFECTED. YOU MAY PROCEED
HEH.
ME AND YOU, SPACEBOY
I HOPE YOU'RE READY FOR THE MIDAS FAMILY
SHH!
WHAT IS THAT? THERE'S NO SENSE OF ANYTHING ALIVE OR THINKING BUT...
OH MY GOD. IT'S WALKING THROUGH BRICKS AND MORTAR LIKE THEY'RE AIR. NOH VARR
ISN'T IT OBVIOUS?



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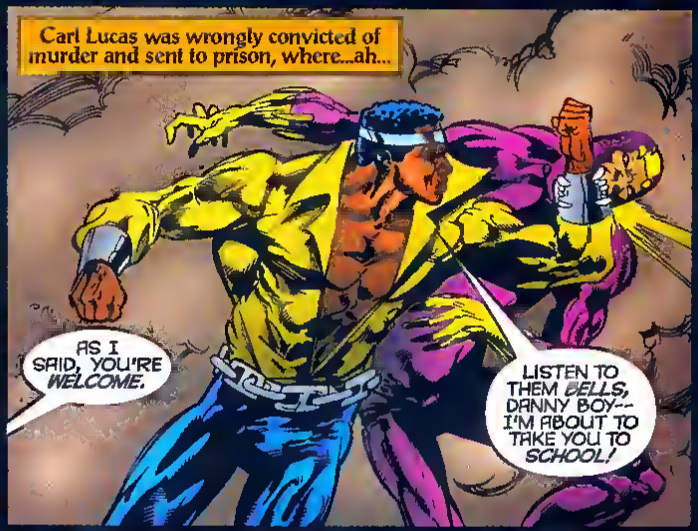


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WITH THE SLEEKNESS OF THE JUNGLE CAT WHOSE NAME HE BEARS T'CHALLA, KING OF WAKANDA, STALKS BOTH THE CONCRETE CITY AND THE UNDERGROWTH OF THE VELDT. SO IT HAS BEEN FOR COUNTLESS GENERATIONS OF WARRIOR KINGS. SO IT IS TODAY. AND SO IT SHALL BE FOR THE LAW DICTATES THAT ONLY THE SWIFT, THE SMART, AND THE STRONG SURVIVE! NOBLE CHAMPION. VIGILANT PROTECTOR.
STAN LEE PRESENTS
BLACK PANTHER
But, as usual, I'm getting ahead of myself...
UPTOWN
Bob Hennas editor in chief


His name was Daniel Rand and he was a multi-millionaire who ran around in a yellow do-rag and high-water tights
FIST--WHAT ARE YOU DOING--?
YOU'RE WELCOME.
FWAAAAAKKK!


SHEE-RIGHT. LIKE I NEEDED HELP WINDIN' UP SHERMAN HEMSLEY OVER THERE.
ALL THESE YEARS, DANNY AND YOU STILL HAVEN'T FIGURED OUT WHO IS SENIOR PARTNER HERE!


Carl Lucas was wrongly convicted of murder and sent to prison, where...ah...
AS I SAID, YOU'RE WELCOME.
LISTEN TO THEM BELLS, DANNY BOY--I'M ABOUT TO TAKE YOU TO SCHOOL!


...where he fell into a vat of Cream of Wheat and became Luke Cage, POWER MAN.
YOU, SIR, ARE LOSER DUDE.
LOSER DUDE IN PLAYED OUT PURPLE COSTUME.
WHOSE MAIN POWER IS TO GO AROUND BITIN' BRUTHAS AND WHAT-NOT.


WHICH MEANS, WHILE YOU CHOMP ON MY STEEL-HARD SKIN, YOU ARE PRETTY MUCH OTHERWISE INCAPACITATED.
AND THIS, FORTU-ITOUSLY, IS MY FIST.
NOW... WATCH AND LEARN.


NEVER KNEW YOU TO GET INTO THE FIGHT BEFORE MORGAN.
WHAT IS IT--MY BIRTHDAY--?
"Snap" Wilson was a racketeer (pronounced pimp) turned social worker
We'll pretend not to know a felony record would disqualify him from that job
YOU'RE RIGHT, SNAP. THE BOSS SHOULD NEVER GET HIS HANDS DIRTY.
I'LL BE LEAVING YOU TO MY ASSOCIATES--I JUST WANTED TO GREET YOU PERSONALLY!
"Snap" flew to Rio--I guess to buy more, ah rackets--and...uh...
...fell into a vat of Cream of Wheat
Anyway, the client made him a set of jet-tipped glider wings and he became THE FALCON
IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME, SNAP. I JUST WANTED TO MAKE YOU FEEL WELCOME!
Last anyone heard "Boss" Morgan had been dropped down an elevator shaft during a mob war
MIND IF I PLAY THROUGH, PANTHER--?
NOT AT ALL, MY FRIEND.
I SEE YOU'VE IMPROVED ON MY WING DESIGN--
Like most Physics Ph.D. holders, Tilda Johnson likes to wear leather bikinis and rob banks as THE DEADLY NIGHTSHADE
YEEEAAARRRGGHH--!!
She had a small arsenal of chemical and biological weapons. And, hopefully for her, a big box of Band-Aids

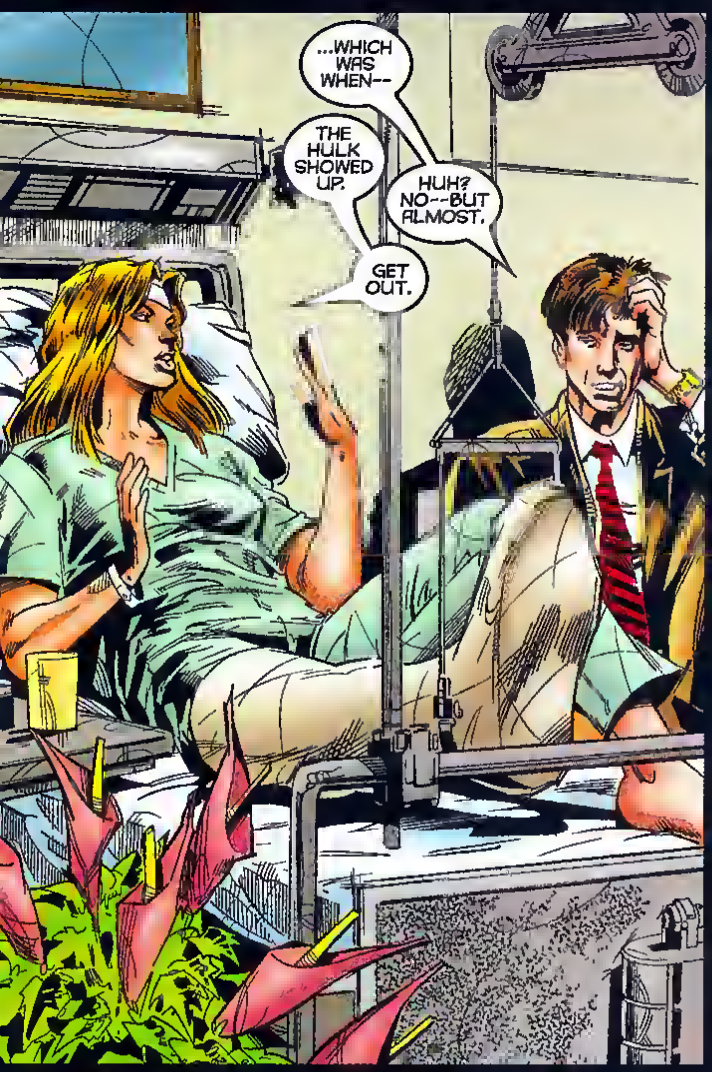

TICKIN' ME OFF, SNAKE DUDE...
...THOUGH, I MUST ADMIT, YOU ARE TAKIN' AN IMPRESSIVE BUTT-KICKING, HERE...
CAGE-- HEADS UP--!!
GREETINGS, MR. CAGE.
IT HAS BEEN A LONG TIME.
YOU ALSO, MR. McLEVER.*
SSSZZAAAGGKKK
HEY-- HEYYY--!!
*QUINCY McLEVER=SNAKE DUDE=COTTONMOUTH. --TOM
CHECK ME, FRISKEES BUFFET: CAGE DOES NOT NEED A RESCUE.
I AGREE.
OF ALL FROM RUBBER SUIT FANG DUDE.
LEAST OF ALL, YES.
GLAD WE GOT THAT STRAIGHTENED OUT.
COULDA DONE THAT...
...GOTTA GET ME SOME OF THEM GLOWIN' BOOTS...
THERE'S A BASIC FLAW TO YOUR MOTIF, STILETTO--
--YOU'RE ONLY AS EFFECTIVE AS YOUR SUPPLY OF BLADES.
AND YOU'RE LIMITED BY RANGE, MUV STEPPER--
--SO MAKE SOME-THING OF IT--
SSSKKAATTCH
ARARRGGGGGHHH!!

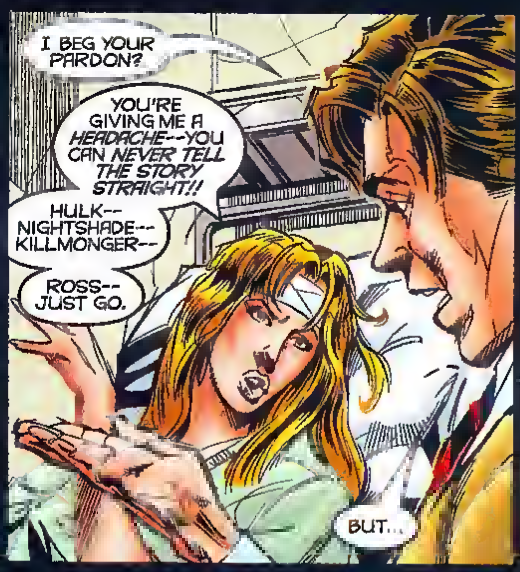

YOU--
YOU STUPID BIRD-BRAIN--!!
GET BACK HERE--I'LL FRICASSEE YOUR DUMB--
HEYY--!!
STILETTO, YOU IDIOT-- DON'TCHA SEE--- THAT'S JUST WHAT THEY WANT--
YUP.
CAN'T PUT ANYTHING PAST YOU, MORGIE.
NOW, CAN YOU GUESS WHAT I'M GONNA DO NEXT--?
E--
HOLMES--THEM JACKIE CHAN MOVES DON'T IMPRESS ME, YO.
C'MERE, LEMME PEEL THAT CAP OFF OF YA--
--?!?
KRREEEEEERRRRRPPP
7


"I DON'T NEED NO RESCUE."
YOU'RE WELCOME.
--OH, IT'S YOU, YOUR HIGHNESS.
SHIN LAI REVERSE?
TAE BO, ACTUALLY.
YOU MUST SHOW ME THAT SOME DAY...
>AHEM<
YOU LADIES ARE DONE COMPARING RECIPES--
--THERE'S SOME BUTT THAT NEEDS A WHUPPIN'!
LUCAS... BABY...
SO NICE TO KNOW YOU STILL CARE
YOU BET.
HERE-- LEMME SHOW YOU--!!
UMMMM
DUMM
DUMMMM
DUMM
DUMMMM
DUMM
DUMMMM
DUMM


And that's the story of how I got back to the States.
Big scary-looking Haitian guy turned out to be a surgeon named Jericho Drumm, whom us regular folks used to call--
BROTHER VOODOO
--AH--
Janet
--AH--
--AH--
planet
--I REALLY HATE THIS JOB...

RE-ENTER THE HULK









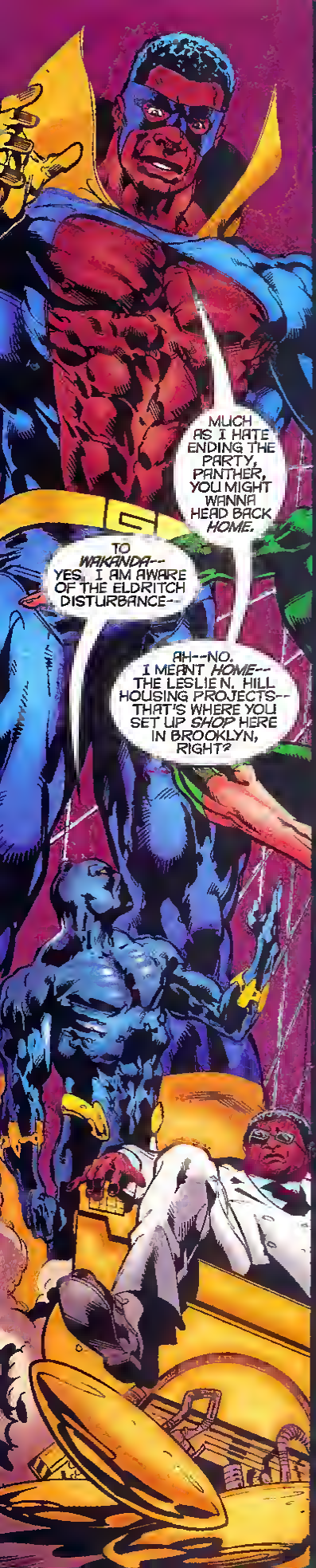



GOD... WHAT A MESS THIS IS...
I AGREE.
T-T'CHALLA--
I THOUGHT WE AGREED ROSS WOULD BE TOLD.
I... BUT...
...FOR CRIPES' SAKE T'CHALLA-- LOOK AT ME! I'VE BEEN A LITTLE BUSY!
YOU CLAIM TO LOVE ME, NICOLE, YET YOU DISHONOR ME AT EVERY TURN.
KEEPING OUR PAST FROM ROSS DEMEANS THE BOND YOU SHARE WITH HIM. YOU MAKE HIM A FOOL, AND YOU USE ME TO DO IT.
I GO TO DEAL WITH N'JADAKA.
UPON MY RETURN, IF YOU HAVE NOT TOLD ROSS, I WILL.
AND ALL HONOR WILL BE LOST.
SON OF A--
KRASSH!
WHUPS--
--DID I COME AT A BAD TIME--?
11

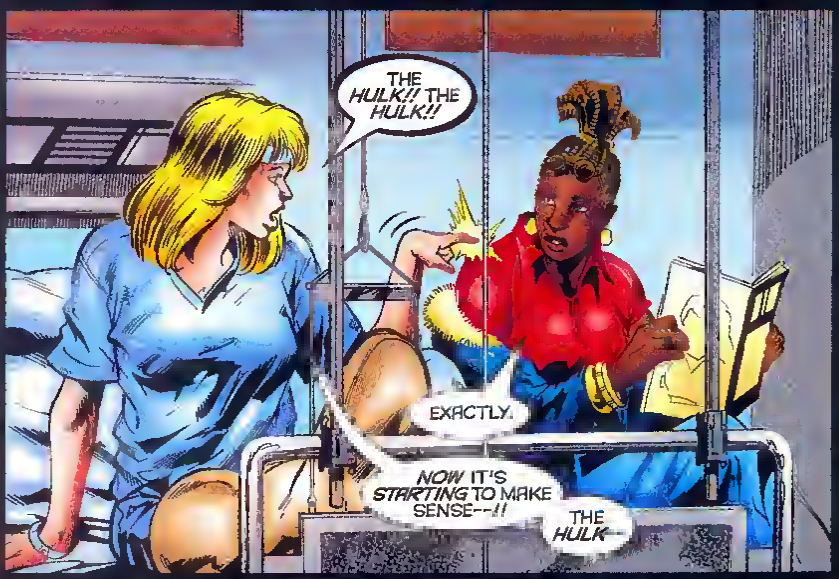

GO AWAY.
AH— NO. QUEEN DIVINE JUSTICE STOPPED TAKING ORDERS FROM SKINNY *BLONDE* GIRLS *YEARS* AGO.
SO— YOU AND BIG CHIEF KITTYCAT, HUH—?
KID— I'LL GIVE YOU 20 BUCKS TO JUST *LEAVE.*
HAVEN'T YOU *HEARD?* I'M THE NEW MEMBER OF THE *DORA MILAJE,* BABY.*
GOT MORE *LOOT* THAN YOU COULD EVER *DREAM* OF.
*Lor-AH May-LAH-jay "ADORED ONES". --TOM
...HMMM... WHAT'S THIS DO?
WHAT DO YOU *WANT?!?*
JUST TRYIN' TO HELP MY MAN *ROSS* OUT. YOU'RE HIS *BOSS*--
--AND, APPARENTLY, HIS *SQUEEZE*--
--AND YOU'RE TRYING TO GET THE *STRAIGHT STORY,* RIGHT? OKAY--CHECK ME--
"THE BOSS GOT HIS KINGDOM BACK, LEFT ROSS IN CHARGE WHILE HE RAN AROUND WITH THE *AVENGERS.*
"THEN HE FOUGHT *HYDRO-MAN,* WHO MENTIONED THE NAME *N'JADAKA.*
"N'JADAKA'S OTHER NAME IS *ERIC KILLMONGER* AND HE'S SUPPOSED TO BE *DEAD.*
"BUT HE WAS ALIVE ENOUGH TO RESCUE MONICA LYNNE AND ROSS FROM THE WAKANDAN JUNGLE--


"--WHILE HIRING BOSS MORGAN TO AMBUSH PANTHER HERE IN THE STATES.
"MORGAN ASSEMBLED A SQUAD OF SUPER-BADDIES--
"--PANTHER WAS BACKED UP BY SOME OF HIS HOMIEZ. THE GOOD GUYS WERE UP, 6-2--
"--WHEN BROTHER VOODOO ARRIVED, BRINGING ROSS BACK FROM WAKANDA WITH HIM.
Janet
"BRUH SENSED A DARK DISTURBANCE IN THE DEAD ZONE-- SOMETHING ABOUT THE VEIL BETWEEN DEAD BROTHERS AND LIVE BROTHERS BEING TORN ASUNDER--
"--AND LOCALIZED SOMEWHERE IN WAKANDA.
NOT AT ALL, DR. DRUMM.
THIS DISTURBANCE-- MIGHT SOME SOUL HAVE CROSSED OVER FROM DEADSIDE BACK INTO LIFE--?!*
*DEADSIDE = LAND OF THE DEAD IN VOUDOU RELIGIOUS BELIEF
MY APOLOGIES, LORD KING T'CHALLA
I SEE THAT YOU ARE BUSY.
THAT IS QUITE POSSIBLE, MY LORD. I HAVE REMOVED YOUR REGENT FROM HARM'S WAY.
I FEAR DIRE CONSEQUENCES IF WE DO NOT--
ENUFF ALREADY!!
RESUME SNUFFING!!


MY APOLOGIES, LORD. I *HAVE* COME AT AN INOPPORTUNE TIME.
THESE ATTACKER'S ARE OF *LITTLE* CONSEQUENCE, DR. DRUMM.
EASY FOR *YOU* TO SAY...
LIKE *HYDRO-MAN* BEFORE THEM, THEY ARE MEANT MERELY AS AN *EMBARRASSMENT* AND A *DISTRACTION*--
--FROM THE WORK OF MY *TRUE* ENEMY.
THEREFORE I MUST CONCLUDE MY BUSINESS HERE *DIRECTLY*--
--WHICH SOUNDS LIKE *MY CUE*--
--TO *JOIN* THE *PARTY!!*
"NOW, FROM WHAT ROSS TOLD ME LATER, BILL FOSTER HAD LOST HIS POWERS AND RETIRED HIS *BLACK GOLIATH* IDENTITY.
"CLEARLY SOMETHING HAD CHANGED. AND, AS I MENTIONED, IT WAS OLD HOMIEZ WEEK, SO FALCON OR SOMEBODY HAD PUT OUT A *CALL*.
"NOT THAT PANTHER'S TEAM *NEEDED* HIM, OF COURSE.
"BUT, SEE, ALL OF A SUDDEN THERE WAS A *CLOCK* TICKING. AND EVERY SECOND PANTHER MANAGED TO SHAVE OFF THE STUPID VILLAIN-BOP, THE *BETTER*."

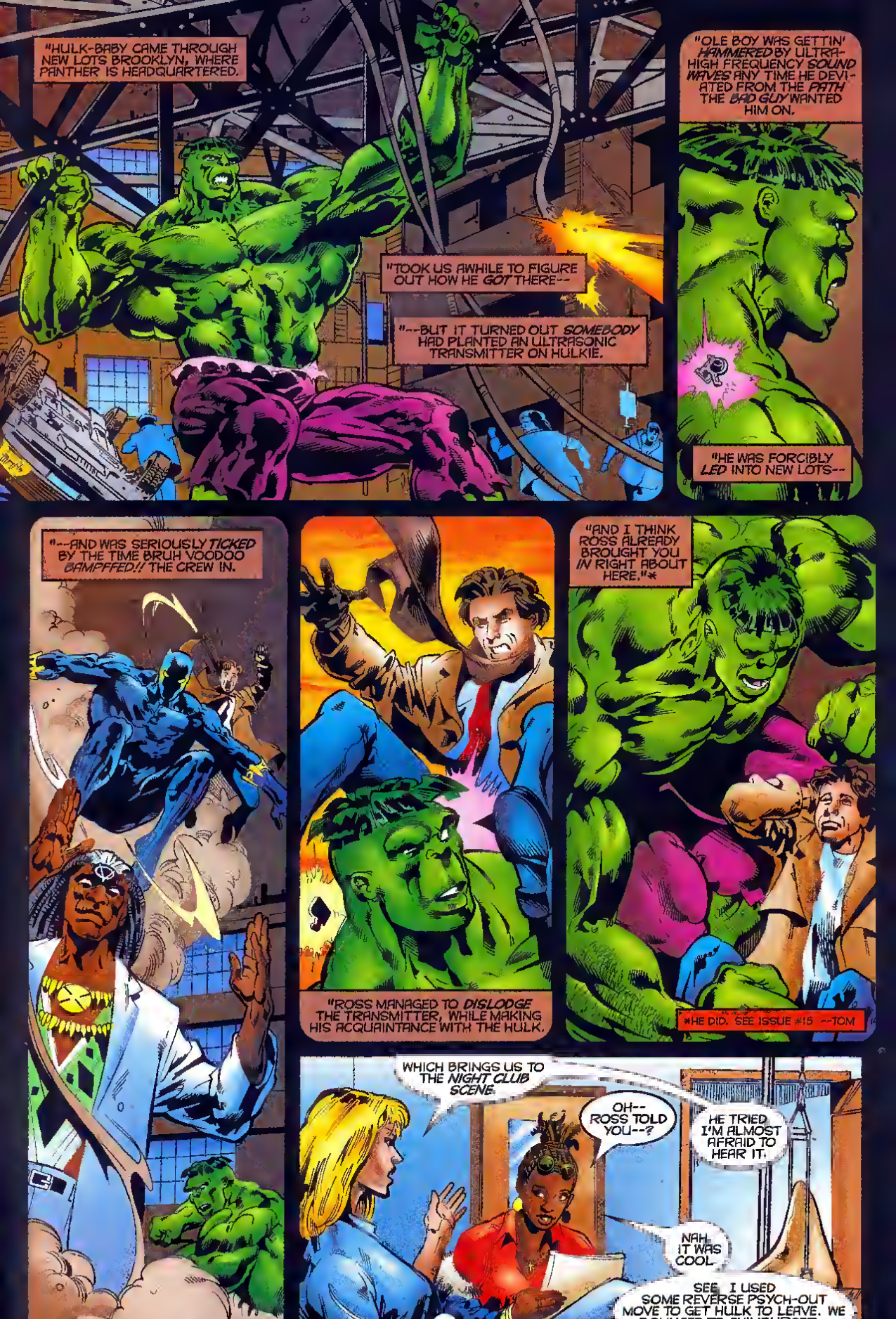

MUCH AS I HATE ENDING THE PARTY, PANTHER, YOU MIGHT WANNA HEAD BACK *HOME*.
TO *WAKANDA*-- YES, I AM AWARE OF THE ELDRITCH DISTURBANCE--
AH--NO. I MEANT *HOME*-- THE LESLIE N. HILL HOUSING PROJECTS-- THAT'S WHERE YOU SET UP *SHOP* HERE IN BROOKLYN, RIGHT?


YES. WE HAVE HEAD-QUARTERED THERE.
WELL-- YOU MAY WANT TO DROP WHAT YOU'RE DOING AND GET *BACK* THERE.
YOU HAVE A *VISITOR*.


THE *HULK!!* THE *HULK!!*
EXACTLY.
NOW IT'S *STARTING* TO MAKE SENSE--!!
THE *HULK*--


WHO CALLS HULK?!?


JUST... JUST WONDERING IF YOU WERE *HUNGRY*, DUDE. ATSALL.
HULK NOT HUNGRY.
HULK TIRED OF WAITING.
I HEAR YA. OUT IN A SEC.
KEEP IT *GREEN*, BABY.


"HULK-BABY CAME THROUGH NEW LOTS BROOKLYN, WHERE PANTHER IS HEADQUARTERED.
"TOOK US AWHILE TO FIGURE OUT HOW HE GOT THERE--
"--BUT IT TURNED OUT SOMEBODY HAD PLANTED AN ULTRASONIC TRANSMITTER ON HULKIE.
"OLE BOY WAS GETTIN' HAMMERED BY ULTRA-HIGH FREQUENCY SOUND WAVES ANY TIME HE DEVIATED FROM THE PATH THE BAD GUY WANTED HIM ON.
"HE WAS FORCIBLY LED INTO NEW LOTS--
"--AND WAS SERIOUSLY TICKED BY THE TIME BRUH VOODOO BAMPFFED!! THE CREW IN.
"ROSS MANAGED TO DISLODGE THE TRANSMITTER, WHILE MAKING HIS ACQUAINTANCE WITH THE HULK.
"AND I THINK ROSS ALREADY BROUGHT YOU IN RIGHT ABOUT HERE."*
*HE DID. SEE ISSUE #15 --TOM
WHICH BRINGS US TO THE NIGHT CLUB SCENE.
OH-- ROSS TOLD YOU--?
HE TRIED. I'M ALMOST AFRAID TO HEAR IT.
NAH. IT WAS COOL.
SEE, I USED SOME REVERSE PSYCH-OUT MOVE TO GET HULK TO LEAVE. WE BOUNCED TO CHILIBURGER...

THEY BOUNCED




THE NIGHT CLUB SCENE
...HIP-HOP...YA DON'T STOP...
...ROUND THE CLOCK...
HE'S WITH ME.
...LAY-DEEZ...MER-SAYY-DEEZ...
KEE ERRAAAKKKK!
YOU CAN SEND THE BILL TO THE WAKANDAN CONSULATE! C'MON, HULK--LET'S DO THIS!
CLUB
MARVEL.COM
TAXI
YOUR HIGHNESS... I REALLY THINK MAYBE WE SHOULD CALL SOMEBODY.
--YES, YOU MAY BE CORRECT.
AH...
...EXCUSE ME--?
MEPHISTO.
ACHEBE.
A CIVIL WAR
AN ALIEN INVASION.
THE SECOND COMING, AND THIS GUY WOULDN'T CALL FOR HELP?
THE CLIENT ADMITTING HE NEEDED HELP SCARED THE BEJEZUS OUT OF ME--
18


'SUP, BRO.
...HIP-HOP...YA DON'T STOP...
'SUP, GUYS--
...ROUND THE CLOCK...
CAN WE HELP YOU LITTLE WHITE MAN?
>ARCRACK--!!<
N--NATIONAL SECURITY--
GUYS--ALL HELL COULD BE BREAKING LOOSE IN THERE--
...LAY-DEEZ...MER-SAYY-DEEZ...
...BASHENGA'S EYES...
...I MAY NOT SURVIVE THIS CHILD...


<BELOVED...I MUST INSIST...>*
TURN IT OFF.
<WHAT...?!>
*THE PANTHER SPEAKS TO THE DORA MILAJE IN HAUSA. --TOM
TURN YOUR COSTUME OFF BEFORE HE SEES YOU.
HULK HAS A KIND OF A ONE-TRACK MIND, Y'KNOW?
<BELOVED... THIS SIMPLY WILL NOT DO...>
ENGLISH, BABY--I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT YOU'RE SAYING!
YOU WILL NOT ADDRESS ME AS "BABY."
OH. OKAY. GOT IT.
LET'S DANCE.
I'VE A BETTER IDEA.
LET'S GET THE HULK OUT OF HERE BEFORE THE RIOT TROOPS ARRIVE.
RIOT TROOPS?! WHO'D BE STUPID ENOUGH TO CALL--
--NEVER MIND.
HI GUYS.
THE SPECIAL FORCES ARE ON THEIR WAY. JUST KEEP HIM PREOCCUPIED A LITTLE WHILE LONGER
--AND THEY'LL GET IN HERE AND BLAST HIM INTO NEXT YEAR--!!
--?!
WHAT'D I DO?


WHY MUST HULK LEAVE?!
I KNOW YOU WANNA STAY BUT, SEE— I GOTTA GO
MY, UH, MY GRANDMA'S SICK—
HULK TAKE QUEEN TO GRANDMA.
YOU CAN'T. YOU HAVE TO GO, NOW.
GO WHERE?
GO WHEREVER YOU WANT. LOOK—
—YOU CAN'T COME WHERE I'M GOING, YOU UNDERSTAND?
I'LL ALWAYS BE YOUR FRIEND, AND I'LL ALWAYS COME WHEN YOU NEED ME. BUT, FOR NOW—
EX 42
FORDHAM
9283
GO BE FREE, BABY.
I'LL PRAY FOR YOU.
HULK PRAY, TOO.
THANKS--
--I THINK I'M GONNA NEED IT.
21


WHICH, I AM TOLD, IS ABOUT WHEN *YOU* MADE *YOUR* MOVE--
OKAY, ROSS--
--JUST HOW HAVE YOU SCREWED UP *THIS* TIME--
--AAAIIEEE--!
--AND *HERE* WE *ARE*. UNFORTUNATELY HULK FOLLOWED ME HERE, SO NOW I HAVE TO LEAD HIM OFF AGAIN.
I MEAN, HOW *LONG* ARE YOU GONNA *KEEP* THE POOR LI'L GUY IN THE *DARK* ABOUT YOU AND *PANTHER?*
ROSS REALLY LOOKS *UP* TO THE KING-- DON'TCHA THINK HE DESERVES TO *KNOW*--
--THAT *YOU* AND HIS *NEW BEST PAL* WERE LOVERS--?!?
WELL, THANKS FOR THAT. ROSS COULDN'T TELL A STORY STRAIGHT TO *SAVE* HIS *LIFE.*
YEAH, AND APPARENTLY, NEITHER CAN *YOU.*
NEXT: THE RUMBLE IN THE JUNGLE. KILLMONGER VS PANTHER: FOR ONCE AND FOR ALL


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//DAWN ONE//
TERRIGEN RAINS IRRIGATING THE CRAWLING BLUE FORESTS ON THE SLOPES OF MIGHTY VAH-RELL//
//DAWN TUO// FIVE HUNDRED SUPER-CITIZENS OF KREE-LAR TRAWLING THE TIDES OF THE SEA OF MONSTERS IN SEARCH OF NEW FABULOUS MUTATIONS TO ENRICH THE GENETIC CORE//
DAWN THREE IN THE FOURTH AEON OF GENE MASTERY// (WE-PLEX INTELLIGENCE SYSTEMS INSTALLING THE WAY THE PRIME FUNCTION OF HALA)//
SENTIENT BEINGS ARE NUMBERLESS
I VOU TO SAVE THEM ALL
DELUSIONS ARE INEXHAUSTIBLE
I VOU TO END THEM ALL
THE GATES OF CREATION ARE MANIFOLD
I VOW TO ENTER THEM ALL
THE KREE WAY IS SUPREME


I VOW TO COMPLETE IT
CAN'T WE BURN THE UGLY FACE OFF THIS THING YET, FOR CRYING OUT LOUD?
IT KEEPS LOOKING AT ME WITH THEM CREEPY CARTOON EYES
GET THOSE S.H.I.E.L.D. MIND PEOPLE OVER HERE TO SHUT DOWN THIS THING'S HIGHER FUNCTIONS BEFORE PARKS FALLS IN LOVE!
YEAH? HOW BAD D'YOU NEED THESE GUYS?
THERE'S WEIRD SNOT LEAKING OUTTA THEIR HEADS SIR
SOMEBODY GET A MEDIC.
THAT'S CEREBRAL TISSUE, SOLDIER.
BAD FAULT
GUH BAD
THESE DROOLING B-HOLES WERE SUPPOSED TO BE IN CHARGE OF THE RAMPAGING MONSTROSITY FROM HADES WE JUST LET LOOSE ON THE NEW YORK CITY SUBWAY
LOOK AT THIS LAST OF THE SORRY TRIO – NO LONGER CAPABLE OF MASTERING HIS OWN BODY WASTES
MAC UMMM BRING NO-MIND
UMMM ALL DEAD
NO-MIND UMMM HERE
BRUNG UMMM DEAD!
YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO PROTECT US ALL FROM THAT THING
GOD HAVE MERCY
BLAM

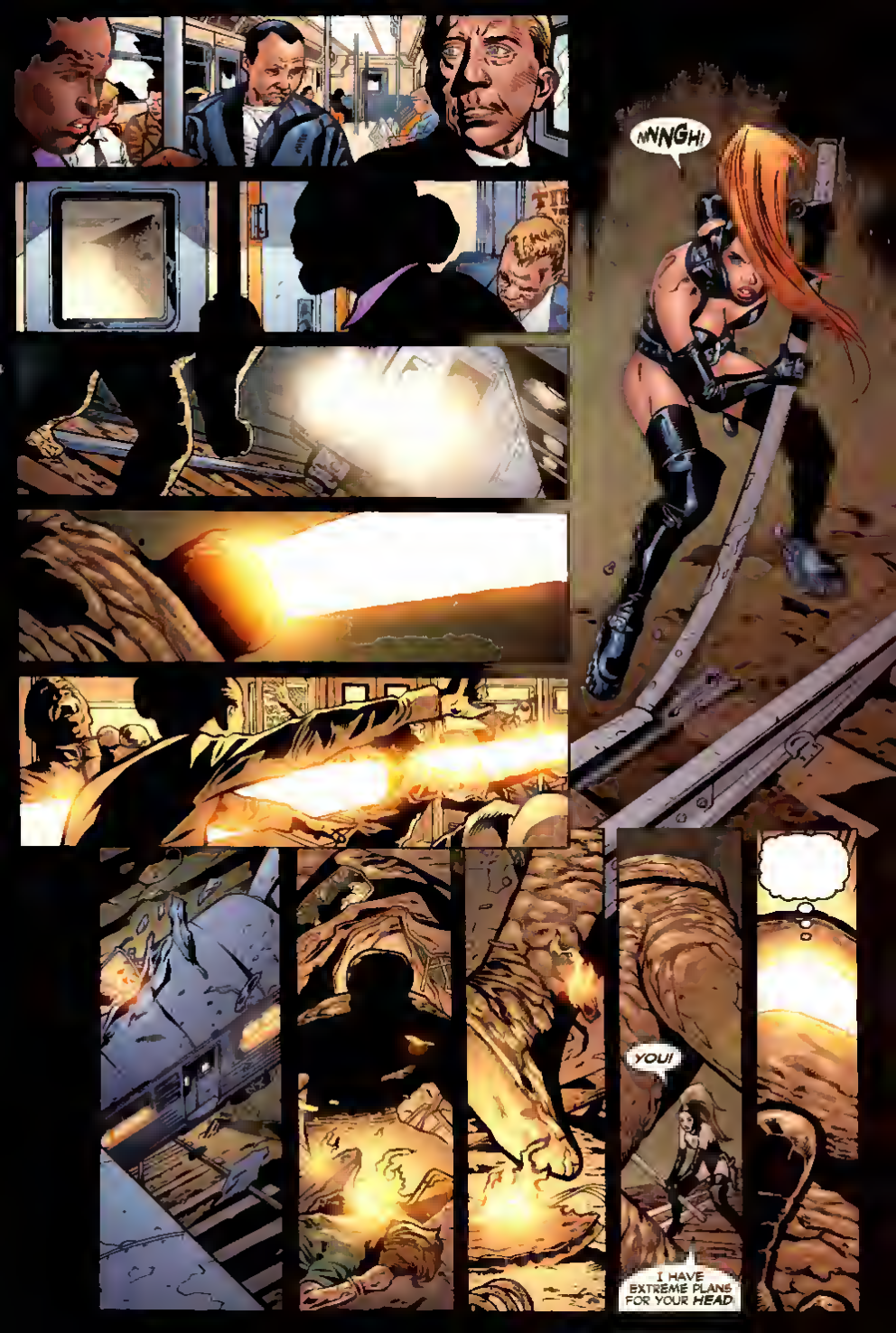


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BOOM!
BOOM!
IT HAS NO THOUGHTS IT'S FROM A DENSER PLANE THAN ORDINARY MATTER
IT CAN'T BE COMMUNICATED WITH IN ANY WAY
I'LL COMMUNICATE WITH IT USING VIOLENCE
YOU WATCH
VORP
BAM
LIFE'S FASTER HERE
IT'S BEING TORN APART BY THE SPEED
SHRINK
TEMPORAL FRICTION I KNOW I'VE SEEN IT
IT'S ADAPTED FOR A MUCH SLOWER WORLD THAN THIS
IT'S GETTING OLD FAST
ALL WE HAVE TO DO IS STAY OUT OF ITS WAY A LITTLE LONGER SPACEBOY
THOOM!

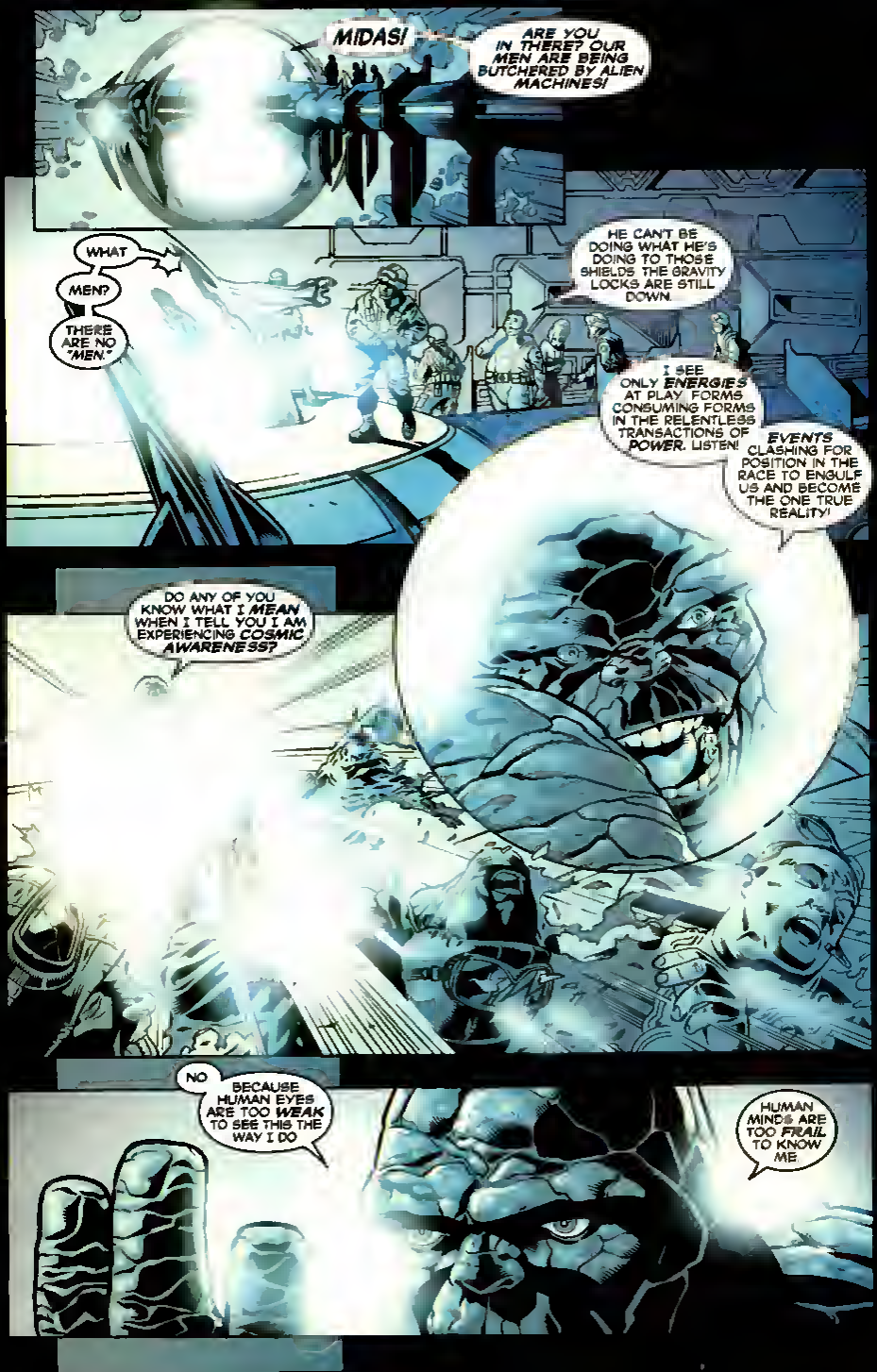

DOCTOR MIDAS! I MUST WARN YOU! NO ONE – NOT EVEN THE RICHARDS PARTY – HAS EVER ENDURED SUCH SUSTAINED EXPOSURE TO RAW COSMIC RADIATION!
YOU MUST EXIT THE CHAMBER! YOU WILL DIE IN THERE
I TURN... EVERYTHING TO MY ADVANTAGE. EVEN DEATH SHOULD THE NEED... ARISE.
YOU ARE EXPERIENCING EXTREME PHYSICAL DISTORTIONS DOCTOR MIDAS! YOUR HEART
I HAVE NO... HEART...
NNNUU... THE PRESSURE... SWELLING...
I... MUSTN'T EXPLODE. DOCTOR... I MUST BREATHE... I MUST ADAPT MY FORM TO CONTAIN THE ENERGY...
I MUST TRANSCEND
ALL PAIN.
ALL LIMITS!

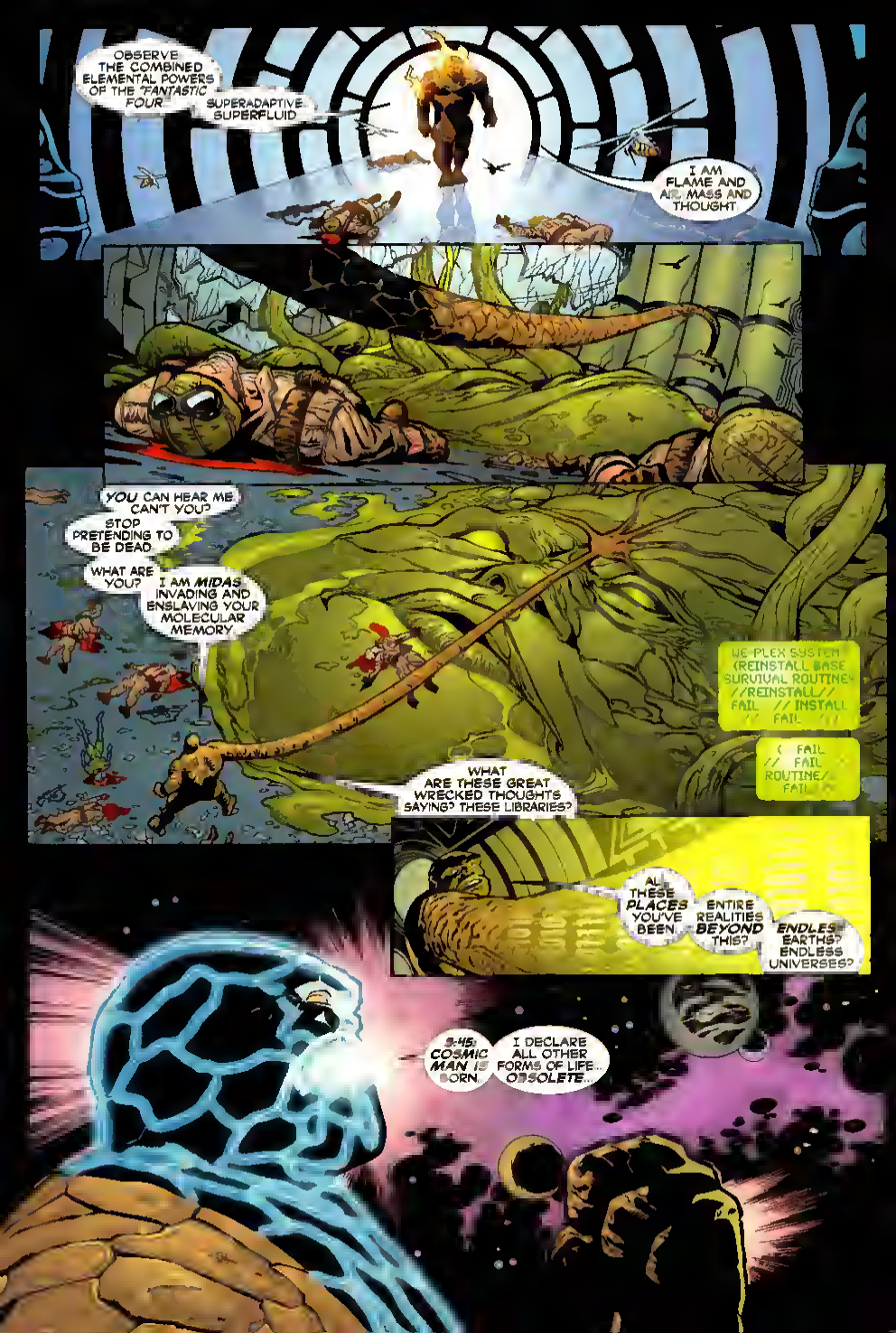

WHAT'S IT LIKE?
WHERE YOU CAME FROM?
JUST A PLACE
BETTER THAN THIS BRIGHTER THAN THIS THAT'S ALL
THE UN-ENTITY'S COMING BACK THROUGH THE WALL
I SAID I'D KILL IT DIDN'T I?
YOU KNOW YOU HAVE MY DAD TO DEAL WITH IF YOU GO BACK.
I DON'T CARE WHO HE THINKS HE IS I DON'T CARE IF HE RULES THE WORLD A THOUSAND TIMES OVER.
I'VE SEEN A MILLION WORLDS
HE'S NOT TAKING MY SPACESHIP.


NNNGH!
YOU!
I HAVE EXTREME PLANS FOR YOUR HEAD.


ONE OF THE MONSTERS IS A GENETICALLY-MODIFIED ALIEN KILLING MACHINE. THE OTHER WIPES A MAN OUT OF EXISTENCE JUST BY LOOKING AT HIM.
BURN THIS FREAKSHOW AND LET'S GET OUT OF HERE
FIRE!!
(PROTO-RESPONSE// [illegible] EMERGENCY BACK-UP// (UNPACK/ INSTALL//) BIO DEFENCIVE
(INSTALL// PLEX INFANTS/ DOMINANT/)
BLOAAAR
EMERGENCY SEARCH AND RECALL// KREE ANCESTRAL ARCHIVE// (MEMORY OPEN)// PROCESS BY TYPE//
IT THREW UP... ALL OVER ME, SIR... IT JUST...
KREE DOCTORS// KREE CHEMISTS// KREE POLICEMEN// KREE POETS// KREE LAWYERS// KREE BOTANISTS//
KREE MURDERERS// (STOP)// PLEX EMERGENCY PATHIC INSTALL


SELECT//INSTALL
PLEX MURDERERS DOMINANT
EVERYBODY STAY CALM, STAY FOCUSED
EVERYTHING'S GONNA BE A-OKAY
EVERYTHING'S...
OVERRIDE HELICOPTERA EMERGENCY TOXIC AGGRESSION PROTOCOLS// INSTALL//
DEFEND THE WAY
DESTROY ALL HOSTILE ORGANISMS...
ANNIHILATE THAT IS UN-KREE
GUARD AGAINST INFECTION
DEFEND AND DESTROY
THE KREE WAY IS SUPREME


MIDAS!
ARE YOU IN THERE? OUR MEN ARE BEING BUTCHERED BY ALIEN MACHINES!
WHAT
MEN?
THERE ARE NO "MEN."
HE CAN'T BE DOING WHAT HE'S DOING TO THOSE SHIELDS THE GRAVITY LOCKS ARE STILL DOWN.
I SEE ONLY ENERGIES AT PLAY FORMS CONSUMING FORMS IN THE RELENTLESS TRANSACTIONS OF POWER. LISTEN!
EVENTS CLASHING FOR POSITION IN THE RACE TO ENGULF US AND BECOME THE ONE TRUE REALITY!
DO ANY OF YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN WHEN I TELL YOU I AM EXPERIENCING COSMIC AWARENESS?
NO
BECAUSE HUMAN EYES ARE TOO WEAK TO SEE THIS THE WAY I DO
HUMAN MINDS ARE TOO FRAIL TO KNOW ME


OBSERVE THE COMBINED ELEMENTAL POWERS OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR
SUPERADAPTIVE SUPERFLUID
I AM FLAME AND AIR, MASS AND THOUGHT
YOU CAN HEAR ME CAN'T YOU?
STOP PRETENDING TO BE DEAD
WHAT ARE YOU?
I AM MIDAS INVADING AND ENSLAVING YOUR MOLECULAR MEMORY
WE-PLEX SYSTEM (REINSTALL BASE SURVIVAL ROUTINES //REINSTALL// FAIL // INSTALL // FAIL //
(FAIL // FAIL ROUTINE/ FAIL
WHAT ARE THESE GREAT WRECKED THOUGHTS SAYING? THESE LIBRARIES?
ALL THESE PLACES YOU'VE BEEN
ENTIRE REALITIES BEYOND THIS?
ENDLESS EARTHS? ENDLESS UNIVERSES?
2:45: COSMIC MAN IS BORN
I DECLARE ALL OTHER FORMS OF LIFE... OBSOLETE...


YOU.
I'VE HAD YOUR DAUGHTER.
NOW I WANT MY SPACESHIP BACK.
PLEX SELF DESTRUCT! FIVE SECONDS TO COSMIC MELTDOWN
NOH-VARR/ NO// SELF-DESTRUCT// ABORT//HELP ME// I AM RUIN//
YOUR CREATURE IS MY BRAIN-DAMAGED SLAVE NOW I CAN TRAUMATIZE ITS SIMPLIFIED MEMORY I CAN MAKE IT HATE YOU AND SERVE ME
MAYBE YOU SHOULD KILL IT BEFORE IT KILLS YOU
VOOP


AAAUUU
URRNN NNUHHH
THIS WILL MAKE A GOOD PIRATE SHIP WHEN YOU'RE DEAD ROACH NAVIGATING THE CURRENTS OF ALL POSSIBLE REALITIES RAPING WORLD AFTER WORLD AFTER WORLD
GROWING RICHER, MORE BLOATED WITH POWER AND
KRACK
I HAVEN'T LIKED YOU SINCE YOU KILLED MY FRIENDS


WHAK
IMAGINE SOMEONE WHO IS MASTER OF THE FOUR TRANSCENDENT ELEMENTS.
COSMIC EARTH, COSMIC FLAME, COSMIC FLUID.
I CAN FOLD SPACE AROUND YOU WITH MY MIND IF I WANT. TWIST IT DOWN INTO SMALLER AND SMALLER PACKETS
KRKKT
BURST YOU LIKE THE OOZING INSECT YOU ARE.
IMAGINE THE MASTER OF THE INVISIBLE AIR
IMAGINE SOMEONE LIKE THAT HITTING YOU AND HITTING YOU UNTIL THERE'S NOTHING LEFT FOR YOU TO DO BUT DIE.
I'M TRIPLE-JOINTED GENE-PERFECTED WITH OPTIMUM SURVIVAL TRAITS.
I'LL LAST OVER A MINUTE LONGER... THAN YOU THINK AND BY THEN YOU'LL BE GONE.
DON'T BE SO
UH!

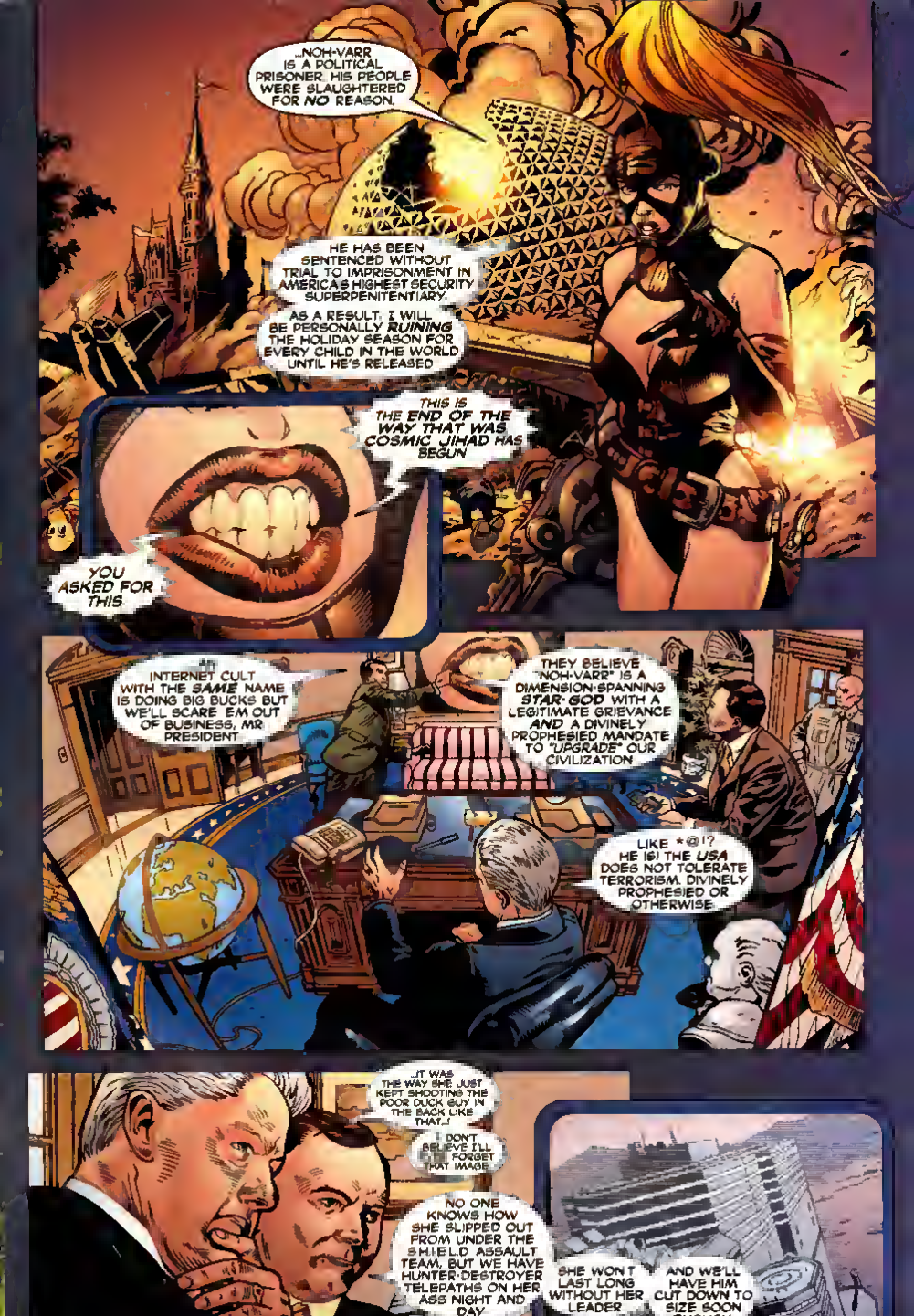

OUBLIETTE. PUT DOWN THAT HEAD BEFORE YOU HURT SOMEONE.
THOSE ARE THE WORDS I'LL TAKE TO MY GRAVE, DAD
EVERYTHING YOU EVER SAID WAS LIES
ALL OF THIS IS YOUR FAULT
NUH.
OUBLIETTE..
TRY TO REPLACE OUR WORLD WITH HIS WAY.. CONTROLLING US ALL WITH FILTHY ALIEN PHEROMONES.. NOT LIES. COME BACK TO ME..
YOU NAMED ME AFTER A MEDIAEVAL TORTURE INSTRUMENT. YOU INSANE PERVERT!
YOU SAID I WAS UGLY!
YOU HAVE TO STOP.


CRUNCH
I'M SERIOUS, DAD. YOU HAVE TO BE STOPPED NOW.
...BUT LOVE... ...LOVE IS LIKE A FIST SOMETIMES...
LOOKED LIKE YOU'D USED ONE OF THOSE BEFORE...
PLEASE BE QUIET. I JUST BLEW UP MY DAD


I FEEL REALLY SICK, SPACEBOY.
ONCE YOU START KILLING MONSTERS, IT GETS HARD TO STOP.
YOU FLATTENED YOUR FATHER BENEATH THE FLOORBOARDS OF REALITY
BE SICK IF YOU WANT THE CARPETING WILL DIGEST IT.
BLAG!
YOU KNOW YOU CAN STAY HERE FOR A WHILE IF YOU HAVE TO
YOU'LL BE SAFE HERE
DIGEST IT?
DANGER
KEEP CLEAR
THOSE THINGS THAT LOOK LIKE CARROTS WHEN YOU'RE SICK
DID YOU KNOW THAT'S ALL OF STOMACH LINING?
I DON'T REALLY CARE...
AND "SHOOT YOU" TO YOU TOO, KID.
GOTCHA.


SUBWHERE.
QUEASY HOLD. HOLD ON TO GUTS MIDAS.
HOLD... IT THERE.
COMPRESSED INTO MOLTEN UNMATTER THAT'S ALL INTO THE INFRASTRUCTURE OF KNOWN SPACE..
I'M STILL ALIVE.. I'M STILL THINKING..
SO HOLD ON BREATHE DEEPLY AND LOOK UP
NOW...
HOW THE [illegible] DO I TURN THIS TO MY ADVANTAGE?


REPAIR AM COME SLOW NOW// NOT SURE WHERE AM WE// OR WHAT IS// OR NOW//
MORE COLORS ALL AROUND AM STRANGE HURTS/ (PLEX CONNECT?)// LOST (FAIL)// REMEMBER
S.H.I.E.L.D. GLOBAL SECURITY: "OVERMIND" TELEPATHIC EXECUTIVE
AM BRAIN-WRECKED (PLEX CONNECT?) UNRECOGNIZABLE/ (FAIL)//
MUST REMEMBER
NOH-VARR
(PLEX CONNECT)//
IT'S AN ALIEN LIFEFORM MOSTLY SYNTHETIC MATERIALS. SOME BIOLOGICAL ELEMENTS.
IT'S ABLE TO THINK, REASON, EMOTE... ALTHOUGH NOT VERY WELL ANYMORE
NEURAL DAMAGE IS PRETTY EXTENSIVE
IT'S HARD TO FIGURE OUT EXACTLY WHAT THEIR CULTURE STANDS FOR.
A LOT OF THE PHILOSOPHY WON'T TRANSLATE INTO ANYTHING WE CAN MAKE SENSE OF
ALL I KNOW IS THIS THING'S PROBABLY A CARRIER OF HIGHLY CONTAGIOUS ALIEN IDEA-COMPLEXES
WE CAN'T RISK CONTAMINATING SOCIETY
ARE YOU GETTING ALL THESE WEIRD CONTRADICTIONS? THIS IS A HIGHLY ADVANCED RACE, BUT... THE NEAREST WE CAN COME TO TRANSLATING THEIR CREED IS... ZEN FASCISM.
BLUE TO OVERMIND IT'S BAD GEOFF WE HAVE TO GET TO THE GIRL BEFORE SHE INFECTS THE MEDIA WITH THIS STUFF


...NOH-VARR IS A POLITICAL PRISONER. HIS PEOPLE WERE SLAUGHTERED FOR NO REASON.
HE HAS BEEN SENTENCED WITHOUT TRIAL TO IMPRISONMENT IN AMERICA'S HIGHEST SECURITY SUPERPENITENTIARY.
AS A RESULT, I WILL BE PERSONALLY RUINING THE HOLIDAY SEASON FOR EVERY CHILD IN THE WORLD UNTIL HE'S RELEASED
THIS IS THE END OF THE WAY THAT WAS COSMIC JIHAD HAS BEGUN
YOU ASKED FOR THIS
INTERNET CULT WITH THE SAME NAME IS DOING BIG BUCKS BUT WE'LL SCARE 'EM OUT OF BUSINESS, MR PRESIDENT
THEY BELIEVE "NOH-VARR" IS A DIMENSION-SPANNING STAR-GOD WITH A LEGITIMATE GRIEVANCE AND A DIVINELY PROPHESIED MANDATE TO "UPGRADE" OUR CIVILIZATION
LIKE *@!? HE IS! THE USA DOES NOT TOLERATE TERRORISM, DIVINELY PROPHESIED OR OTHERWISE
...IT WAS THE WAY SHE JUST KEPT SHOOTING THE POOR DUCK GUY IN THE BACK LIKE THAT...!
I DON'T BELIEVE I'LL EVER FORGET THAT IMAGE
NO ONE KNOWS HOW SHE SLIPPED OUT FROM UNDER THE S.H.I.E.L.D. ASSAULT TEAM, BUT WE HAVE HUNTER-DESTROYER TELEPATHS ON HER ASS NIGHT AND DAY
SHE WON'T LAST LONG WITHOUT HER LEADER
AND WE'LL HAVE HIM CUT DOWN TO SIZE SOON ENOUGH


WELCOME TO THE CUBE: THE ULTIMATE PRISON EXPERIENCE THREE HUNDRED MILES FROM ANYWHERE INESCAPABLE HOME TO FOUR HUNDRED OF THE MOST DERANGED AND UNCONTROLLABLE SUPER PSYCHOPATHS IN EXISTENCE
NO CONTACT WITH THE OUTSIDE WORLD NO PITY
PLACE WAS DESIGNED TO HOLD DOCTOR DOOM AND GUARANTEED TO BREAK THE HARDEST ASS
SIX MONTHS. YOU'LL BE A CRAWLING DAWG LIKE ALL THE REST
I ONLY NEED FIVE TO TURN THE PLACE AROUND
WELCOME TO THE CAPITAL CITY OF THE NEW KREE EMPIRE
ADVENTURES BEYOND REASON
VIOLENCE BEYOND MEANING
AND THE END OF THE WAY THAT WAS
PREPARE YOUR MINDS FOR:
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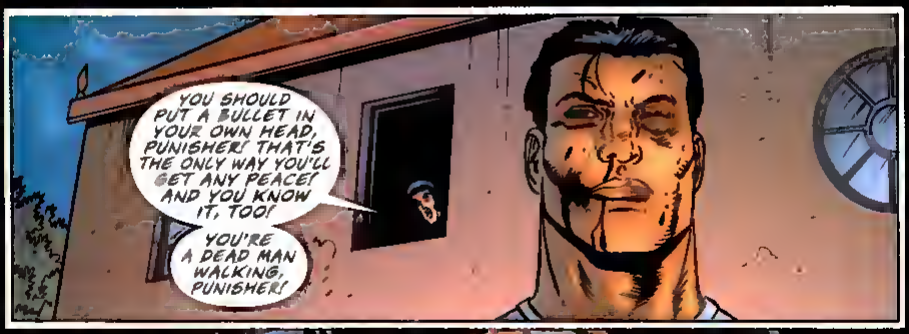
GO FRANK GO

GARTH ENNIS STORY STEVE DILLON PENCILS JIMMY PALMIOTTI INKS
CHRIS SOTOMAYOR COLORS RICHARD STARKINGS & COMICRAFT'S WES ABBOTT LETTERS
KELLY LAMY ASST EDITOR NANCI DAKESIAN & STUART MOORE EDITORS JOE QUESADA CHIEF

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I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU'RE ACTUALLY DOING THIS..!
YOU'RE A MONSTER AND I'M KILLING YOU. IT'S NOT COMPLICATED.
BUT WHY THIS? WHY BURN THE ENTIRE HOUSE DOWN?
TALK TO ME, YOU PIG!
BECAUSE I WANT YOU GONE FROM THE FACE OF THIS EARTH.
YOU SCUM! YOU VICIOUS, EVIL SCUM!
YOU'RE NO BETTER THAN I AM, PUNISHER!


YOU THINK YOU'RE BETTER. YOU THINK YOU'RE ON THE SIDE OF JUSTICE. BUT YOU'RE WRONG!
YOU'RE A SERIAL KILLER PUNISHER! YOU'RE INSANE!
IT'S MASS MURDER, WHATEVER YOU WANT TO CALL IT! IT'S GENOCIDE!
WHAT'LL YOU DO, KEEP GOING 'TIL WE'RE ALL DEAD? WILL THAT MAKE YOU HAPPY, YOU SICK, TWISTED CREEP?!


YOU SHOULD PUT A BULLET IN YOUR OWN HEAD, PUNISHER! THAT'S THE ONLY WAY YOU'LL GET ANY PEACE! AND YOU KNOW IT, TOO!
YOU'RE A DEAD MAN WALKING, PUNISHER!

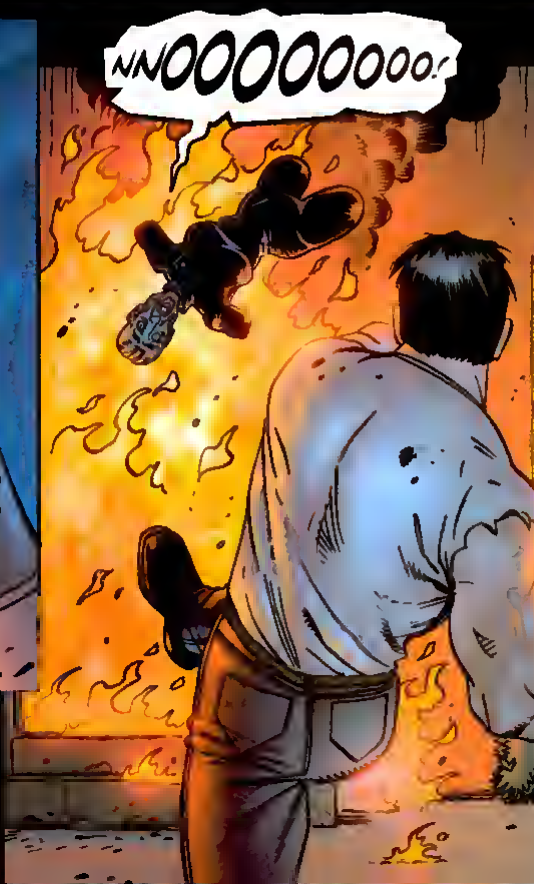

YOU ARE DAMNED!

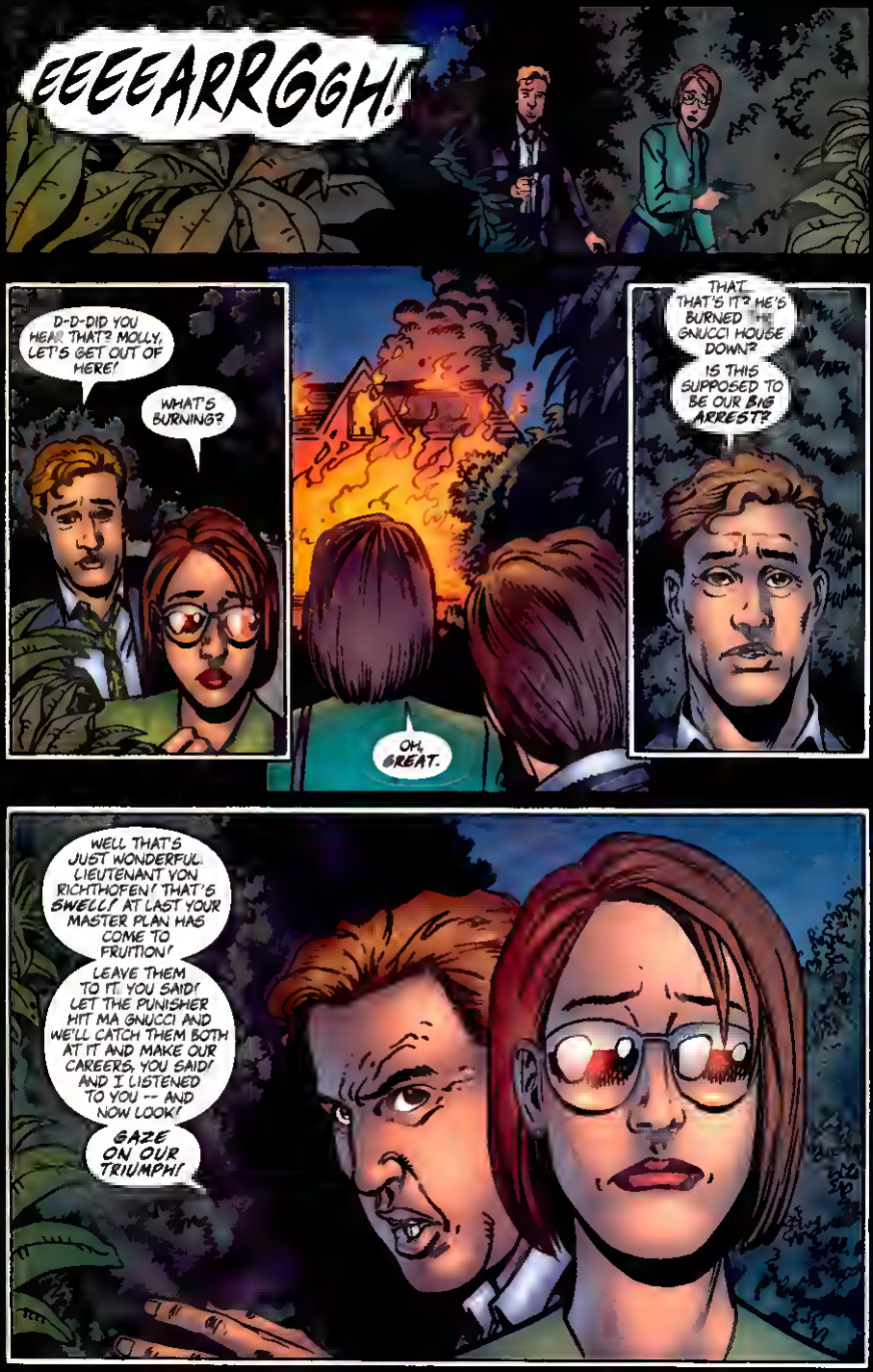

SO TELL ME SOMETHING I DON'T KNOW.
AAIIIEEEEE!!

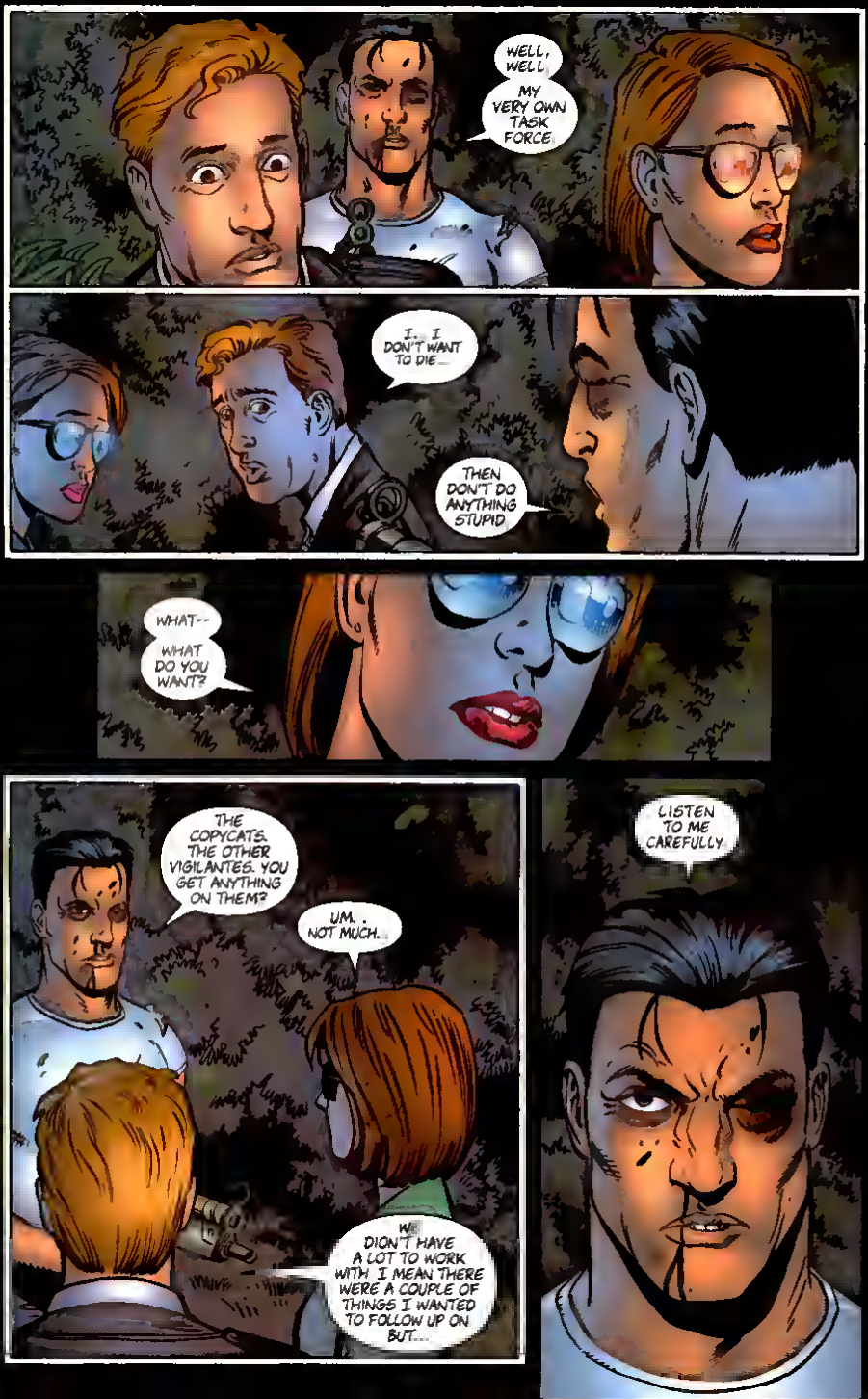

HNK-- NO-- GOT TO-- AAAAH--!
NOT GOING TO -- LET YOU WIN, ANIMAL --
GOING TO BEAT YOU YET--
I'M COMING TO GET YOU, PUNISHER!

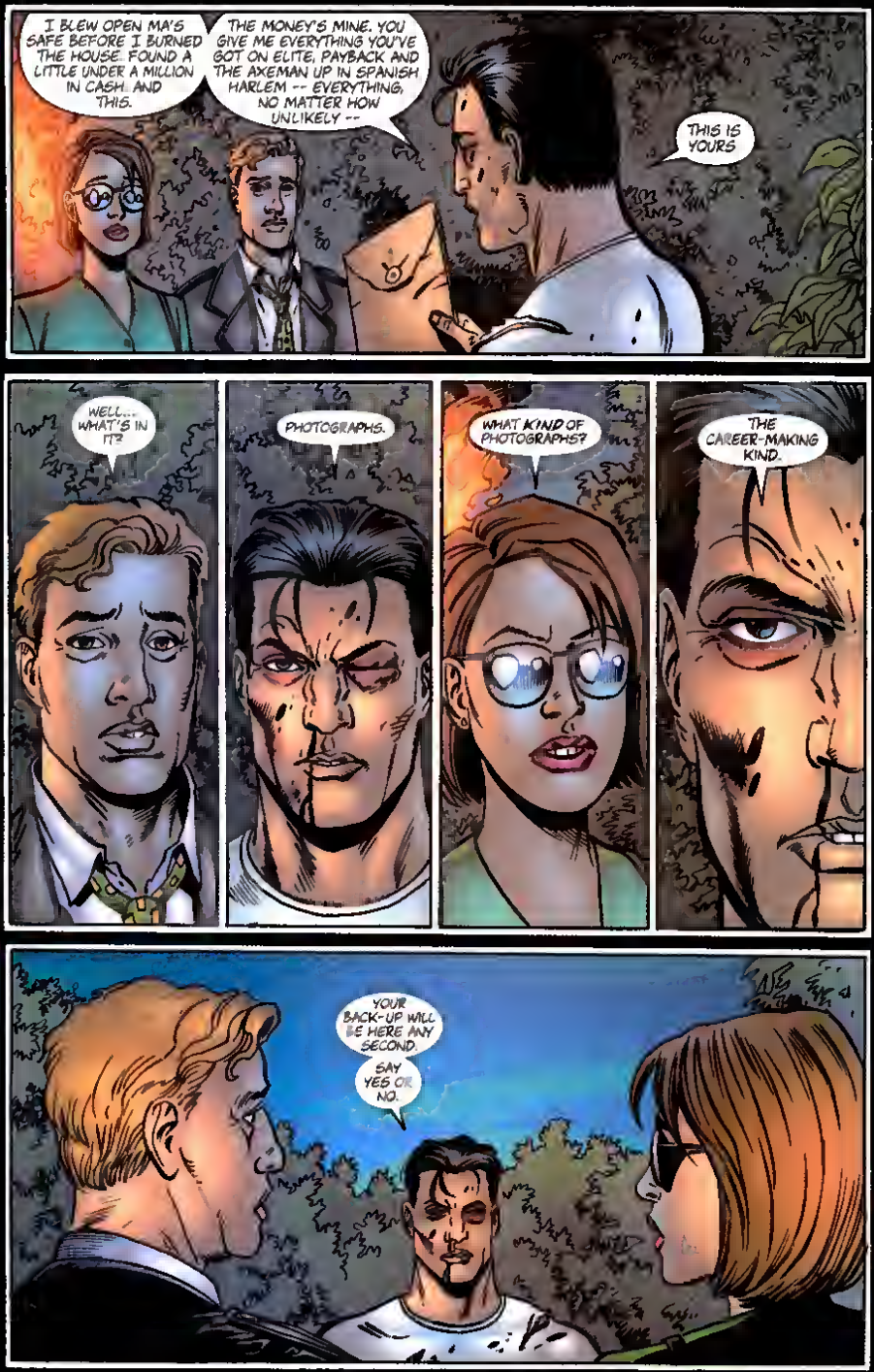

UNNGGH!
NOT GIVING UP -- NOT GIVING IN --
HNNNGH! HNNNGHHHH! HHNNNGGH!

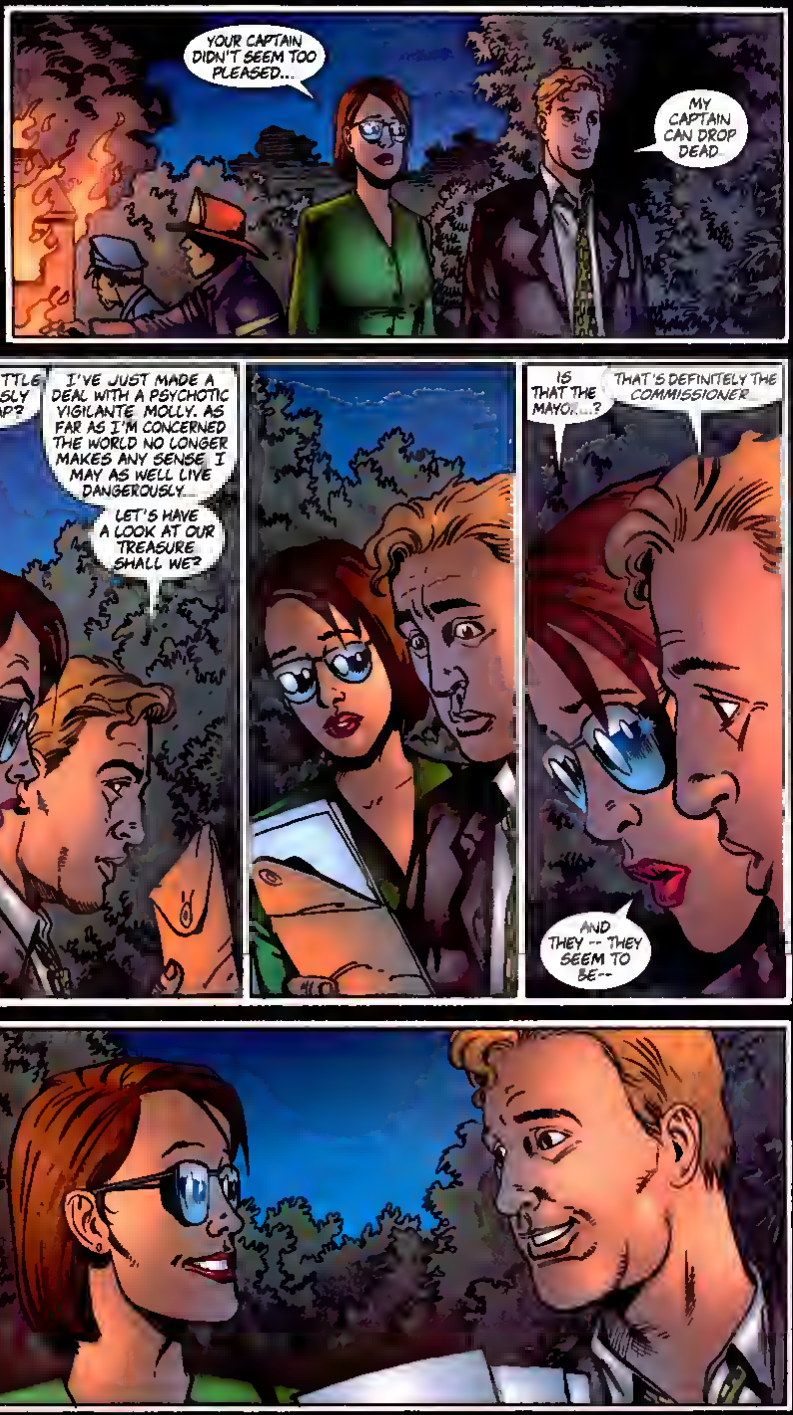

GO BACK TO HELL, MA.

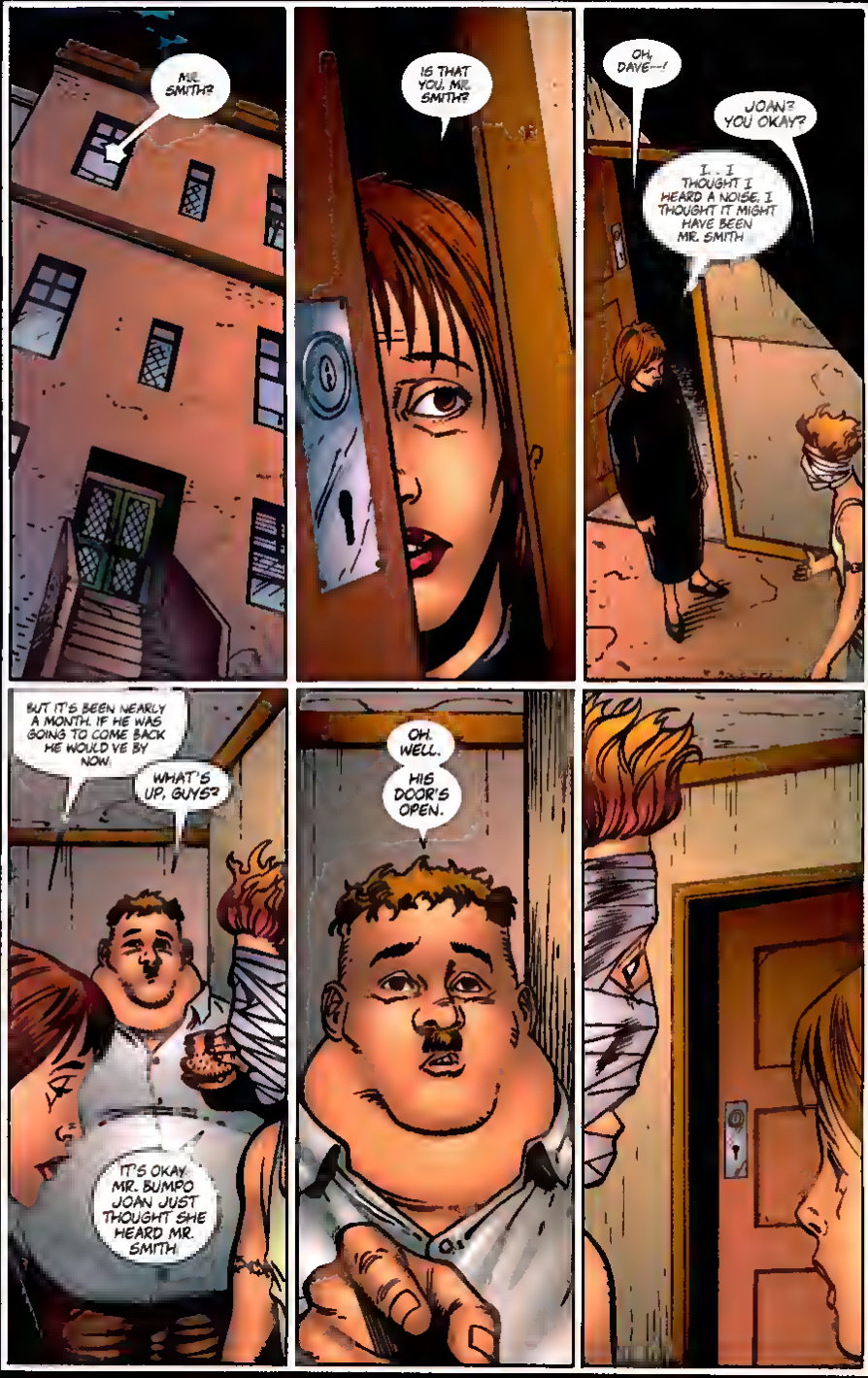

NNOOOOOOOO!


EEEARRGGH!
D-D-DID YOU HEAR THAT? MOLLY, LET'S GET OUT OF HERE!
WHAT'S BURNING?
OH, GREAT.
THAT... THAT'S IT? HE'S BURNED THE GNUCCI HOUSE DOWN?
IS THIS SUPPOSED TO BE OUR BIG ARREST?
WELL THAT'S JUST WONDERFUL, LIEUTENANT VON RICHTHOFEN! THAT'S SWELL! AT LAST YOUR MASTER PLAN HAS COME TO FRUITION!
LEAVE THEM TO IT, YOU SAID! LET THE PUNISHER HIT MA GNUCCI AND WE'LL CATCH THEM BOTH AT IT AND MAKE OUR CAREERS, YOU SAID! AND I LISTENED TO YOU -- AND NOW LOOK!
GAZE ON OUR TRIUMPH!


WELL, WELL
MY VERY OWN TASK FORCE
I... I DON'T WANT TO DIE...
THEN DON'T DO ANYTHING STUPID
WHAT--
WHAT DO YOU WANT?
THE COPYCATS. THE OTHER VIGILANTES. YOU GET ANYTHING ON THEM?
UM... NOT MUCH...
WE DIDN'T HAVE A LOT TO WORK WITH. I MEAN THERE WERE A COUPLE OF THINGS I WANTED TO FOLLOW UP ON BUT...
LISTEN TO ME CAREFULLY.


I BLEW OPEN MA'S SAFE BEFORE I BURNED THE HOUSE. FOUND A LITTLE UNDER A MILLION IN CASH. AND THIS.
THE MONEY'S MINE. YOU GIVE ME EVERYTHING YOU'VE GOT ON ELITE, PAYBACK AND THE AXEMAN UP IN SPANISH HARLEM -- EVERYTHING, NO MATTER HOW UNLIKELY --
THIS IS YOURS
WELL... WHAT'S IN IT?
PHOTOGRAPHS.
WHAT KIND OF PHOTOGRAPHS?
THE CAREER-MAKING KIND.
YOUR BACK-UP WILL BE HERE ANY SECOND.
SAY YES OR NO.


YOUR CAPTAIN DIDN'T SEEM TOO PLEASED...
MY CAPTAIN CAN DROP DEAD.
LIVING A LITTLE DANGEROUSLY THERE, SOAP?
I'VE JUST MADE A DEAL WITH A PSYCHOTIC VIGILANTE MOLLY. AS FAR AS I'M CONCERNED THE WORLD NO LONGER MAKES ANY SENSE. I MAY AS WELL LIVE DANGEROUSLY...
LET'S HAVE A LOOK AT OUR TREASURE SHALL WE?
IS THAT THE MAYOR...?
THAT'S DEFINITELY THE COMMISSIONER
AND THEY -- THEY SEEM TO BE--


MR. SMITH?
IS THAT YOU, MR. SMITH?
OH, DAVE--!
JOAN? YOU OKAY?
I..I THOUGHT I HEARD A NOISE. I THOUGHT IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN MR. SMITH
BUT IT'S BEEN NEARLY A MONTH. IF HE WAS GOING TO COME BACK HE WOULD'VE BY NOW.
WHAT'S UP, GUYS?
IT'S OKAY MR. BUMPO JOAN JUST THOUGHT SHE HEARD MR. SMITH.
OH. WELL.
HIS DOOR'S OPEN.


HELLO?
MR. SMITH? IT'S US, MR. SMITH...
TRY TO FIND THE LIGHT, GUYS
DAVE, HOW COME YOU'RE STILL ALL BANDAGED UP? HASN'T YOUR FACE HEALED YET?
YEAH, BUT I KIND OF LIKE BEING BANDAGED. IT'S EVEN MORE INDIVIDUAL THAN PIERCING, IT SAYS MORE ABOUT ME...
AH.
...OH.
I KNEW IT.
HE WON'T BE BACK. NOT EVER.
I'M ALWAYS GOING TO BE HERE. I'M ALWAYS GOING TO BE SCARED.
JOAN?


I THINK YOU SHOULD TAKE A LOOK AT THIS.



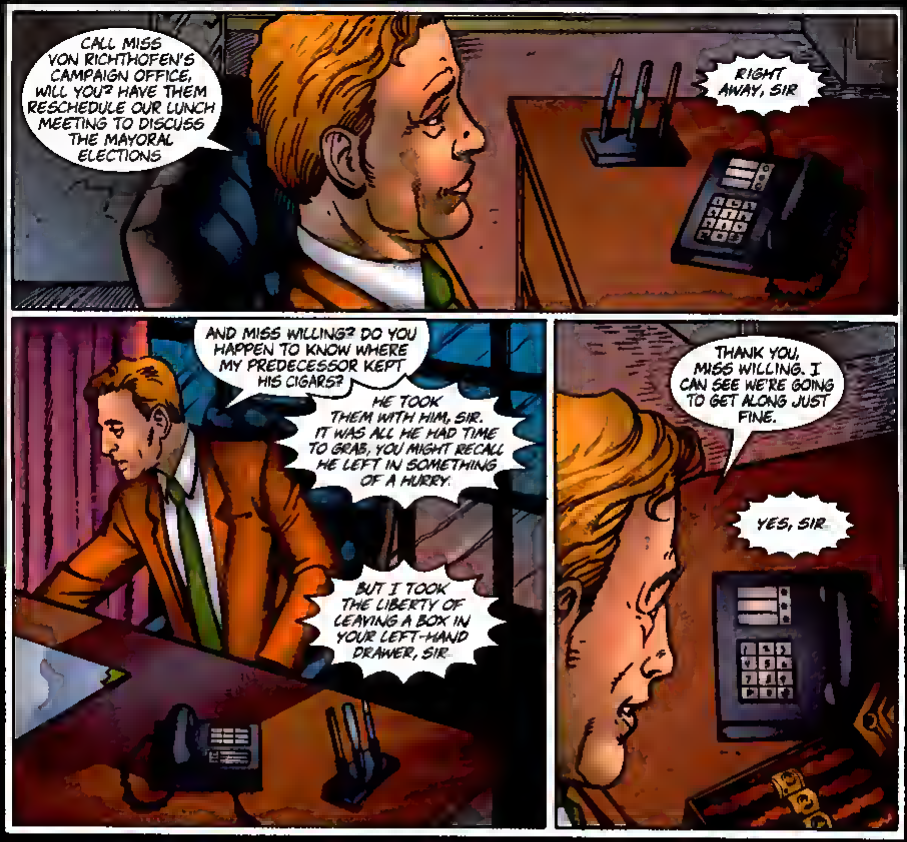

JOAN
JOAN.?


JOAN.
JUST GO.
FRANK.

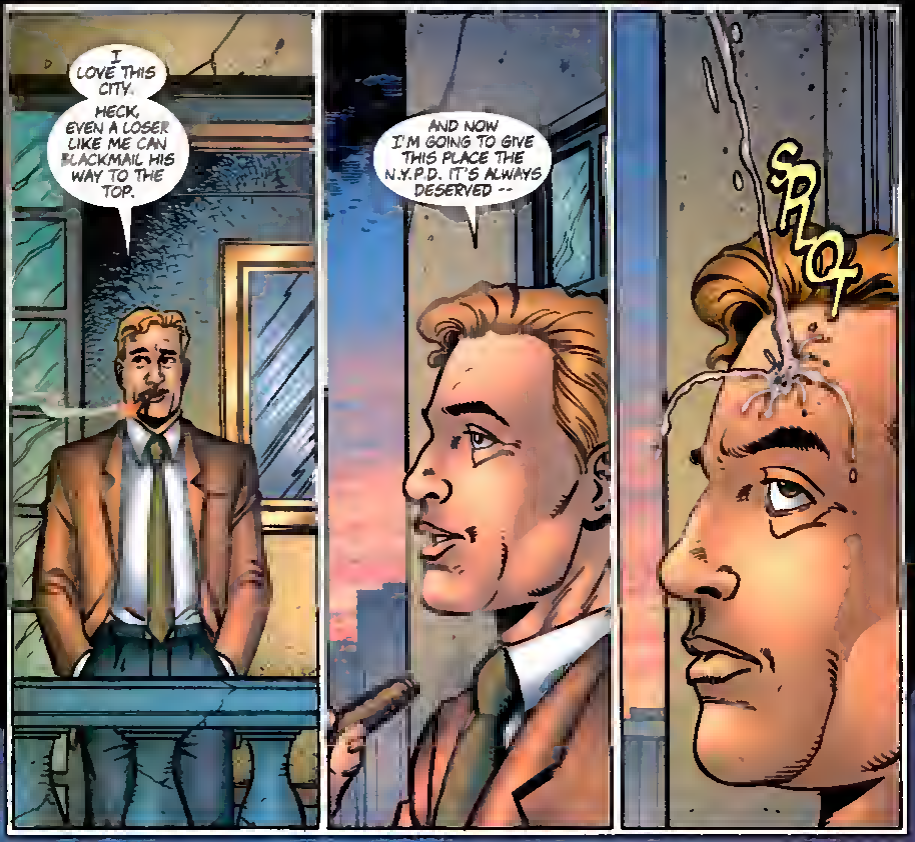


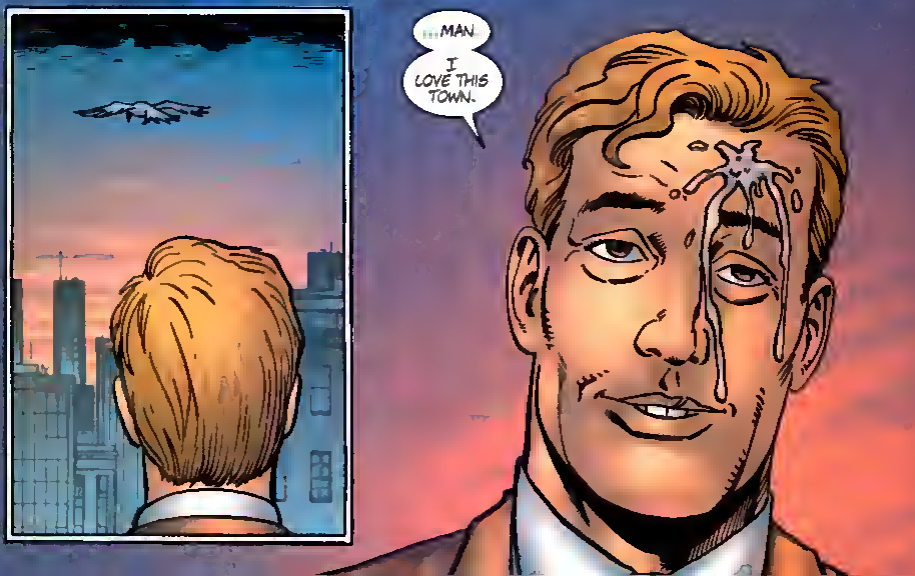

I DON'T BELIEVE THIS! I DON'T!
I'M GOING TO EAT THE ENTIRE CITY, JUST LIKE A BIG BAGEL...
YES! YES! YES!
SPACKER DAAAAAVE!!
BEST I CAN DO, JOAN.
DAVE.
MR. BUMPO.
MAYBE I AM DAMNED.
BUT I'M NOT DRAGGING YOU GOOD PEOPLE DOWN WITH ME


Soap-
Might stay an extra couple of weeks.
Molly
P.S. The Outlaw Josey Wales!
STATE OF GRACE.
SEE YOU SOON, MOLL.
MISS WILLING?
YES, COMMISSIONER SOAP?

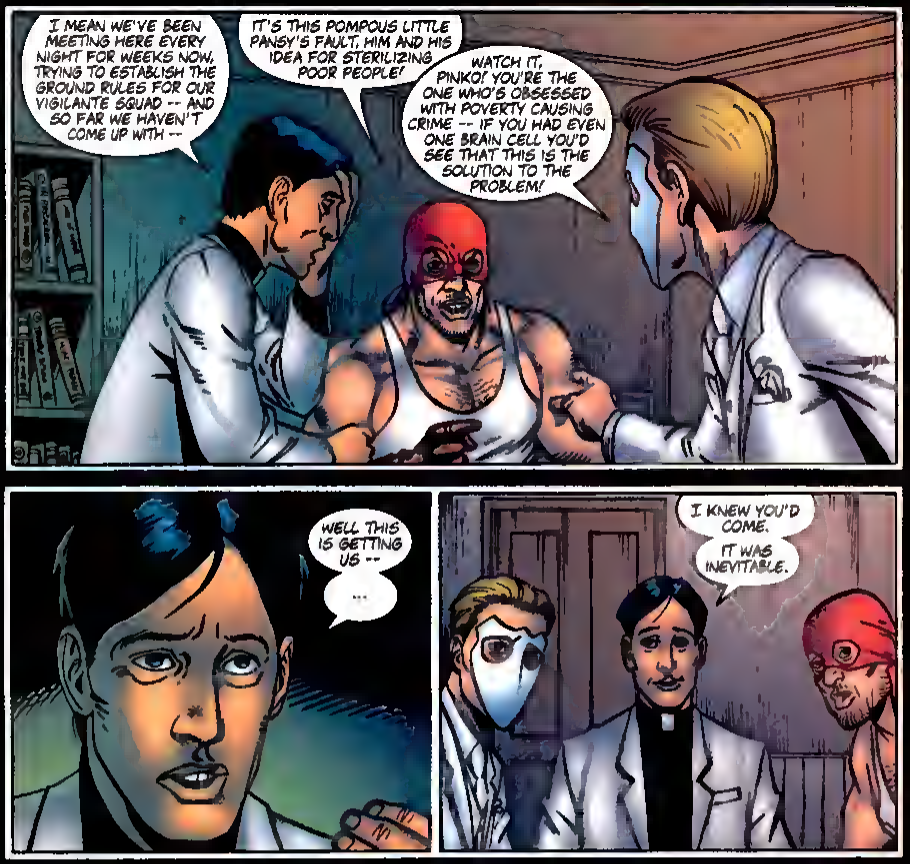

CALL MISS VON RICHTHOFEN'S CAMPAIGN OFFICE, WILL YOU? HAVE THEM RESCHEDULE OUR LUNCH MEETING TO DISCUSS THE MAYORAL ELECTIONS
RIGHT AWAY, SIR
AND MISS WILLING? DO YOU HAPPEN TO KNOW WHERE MY PREDECESSOR KEPT HIS CIGARS?
HE TOOK THEM WITH HIM, SIR. IT WAS ALL HE HAD TIME TO GRAB, YOU MIGHT RECALL HE LEFT IN SOMETHING OF A HURRY.
BUT I TOOK THE LIBERTY OF LEAVING A BOX IN YOUR LEFT-HAND DRAWER, SIR.
THANK YOU, MISS WILLING. I CAN SEE WE'RE GOING TO GET ALONG JUST FINE.
YES, SIR.


THAT'LL BE ALL FOR NOW, MISS WILLING.
YES SIR, COMMISSIONER SOAP.

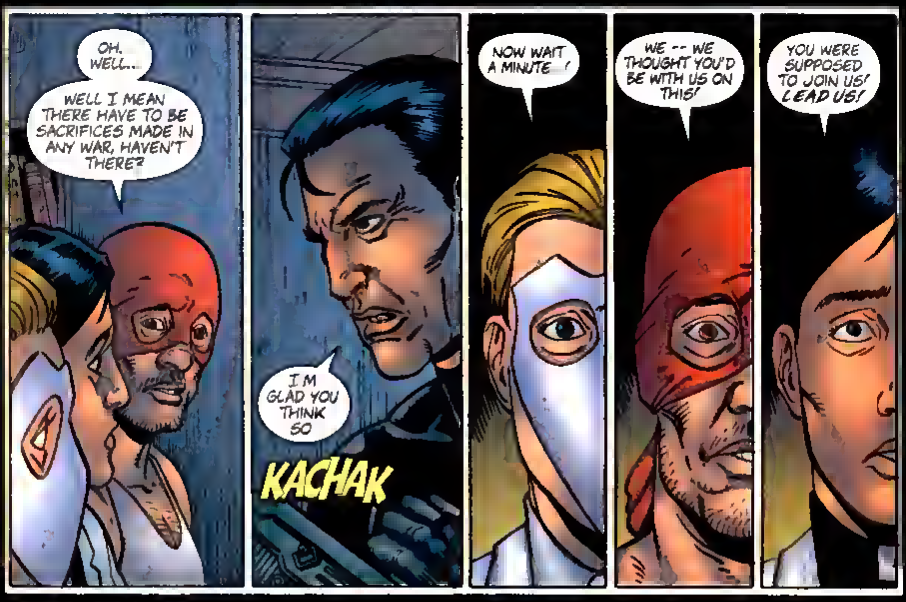

I LOVE THIS CITY.
HECK, EVEN A LOSER LIKE ME CAN BLACKMAIL HIS WAY TO THE TOP.
AND NOW I'M GOING TO GIVE THIS PLACE THE N.Y.P.D. IT'S ALWAYS DESERVED --
SPLAT


...MAN.
I LOVE THIS TOWN.


ONE LAST THING
THE TWO COPS' WORK IS PRETTY SKETCHY ALREADY SPENT A WEEK GETTING NOWHERE
ELITE HASN'T SHOWN SEEMS TO HAVE QUIT ON THE NEIGHBORHOOD HE WAS WORKING. AND MR. PAYBACK COULD HIT ANY BANK IN TOWN, ANY OFFICE ON WALL STREET. I'D STILL BE WAITING YEARS FROM NOW.
WHICH LEAVES THE AXEMAN.
THIS PLACE WAS SOAP'S ONE LEAD ALL THE VICTIMS WENT HERE FOR CONFESSION
PRIEST WHO TOOK THEM IS ONE FATHER HECTOR REDONDO.
OR AS SOAP'S NOTES PUT IT
F.M.R --???!!!
FOR CRYING OUT LOUD WE'LL NEVER KILL ANYONE AT THIS RATE!


I MEAN WE'VE BEEN MEETING HERE EVERY NIGHT FOR WEEKS NOW, TRYING TO ESTABLISH THE GROUND RULES FOR OUR VIGILANTE SQUAD -- AND SO FAR WE HAVEN'T COME UP WITH --
IT'S THIS POMPOUS LITTLE PANSY'S FAULT, HIM AND HIS IDEA FOR STERILIZING POOR PEOPLE!
WATCH IT, PINKO! YOU'RE THE ONE WHO'S OBSESSED WITH POVERTY CAUSING CRIME -- IF YOU HAD EVEN ONE BRAIN CELL YOU'D SEE THAT THIS IS THE SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM!
WELL THIS IS GETTING US --
...
I KNEW YOU'D COME.
IT WAS INEVITABLE.
IT CERTAINLY WAS.


THIS -- THIS IS A GREAT HONOR! YOU CAN'T BEGIN TO IMAGINE WHAT THIS MEANS TO US!
SIR, YOUR WORK INSPIRED MY OWN. IT INSPIRED US ALL.
AND NOW YOU'VE COME TO LEAD US, TO LEAD OUR SQUAD...!
LEAD YOU?
OF COURSE!
LEAD YOU.
YOU'RE A LUNATIC.
YOU'RE A NAZI.
AND YOU -- DOES THE NAME MARIA LOPEZ MEAN ANYTHING TO YOU?
EH?
MARIA LOPEZ WAS A CLEANER AT THE WORLDWIDE INVESTMENT BUILDING. SHE DIED WHEN ONE OF YOUR BULLETS WENT THROUGH THE WALL OF THE BOARDROOM
SHE'S ONE OF FOUR INNOCENT PEOPLE WHO'VE BEEN CUT DOWN IN THE CROSSFIRE OF YOUR LITTLE CRUSADE, JUST BECAUSE YOU COULDN'T BE BOTHERED TO PLAN PROPERLY


OH. WELL...
WELL I MEAN THERE HAVE TO BE SACRIFICES MADE IN ANY WAR, HAVEN'T THERE?
I'M GLAD YOU THINK SO
KACHAK
NOW WAIT A MINUTE!
WE -- WE THOUGHT YOU'D BE WITH US ON THIS!
YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO JOIN US! LEAD US!


THIS IS WHAT YOU DO ISN'T IT? YOU'RE JUST LIKE US! YOU KILL THE SAME SCUM WE DO!
WE'VE GOT IT ALL WORKED OUT! THE VIGILANTE SQUAD! WITH SECRET PLANS AND PASSWORDS AND CODES AND THINGS!
TOGETHER WE CAN PUNISH THE GUILTY! WE CAN CLEAN UP THIS CITY ONCE AND FOR ALL!


IN HEAVEN'S NAME, MAN! ISN'T THIS EXACTLY WHAT YOU WANT?!



THE END


MARVEL